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EDITORIAL:

CRITICISM, EFFECT AND MORALS

The reviews and journals, they say, continue to attack me, but I value neither the fame they can give nor the fame they can take away, therefore blessed be the name of the reviews.—Shelley.

It is perhaps fortunate for literature that the ultimate assessment of a poet's value does not rest with his contemporary critics but it is remarkable that the same critics seem in every way competent to judge the work of former poets. Many modern critics are so well aware of this apparent traditional incongruity in their make-up that they have acquired a slightly inhibited attitude toward modern poetry, lest, as it were, the thorough penetration of a poem should leave no excuse for a pronouncement ultimately proved wrong. We question whether a superficially correct judgment is better than a profoundly wrong one and ask if, indeed, a superficial judgment is in any manner correct; certainly the superficial judgment can do more harm at large than that which is arrived at after extensive research on the part of the critic and then found to be faulty.

Merely to avoid the formation of superficial opinions, therefore, is not to ensure the formation of sound judgments; the critic who is best equipped intellectually is of course best qualified to probe within the limits of the poet's intellect, but beyond those limits the value of his findings depends upon more than a capacity to dig and sift; he must be able to discern and capture with lightning swiftness, since poetry is a mercurial commodity, quick to elude a slow grasp.

If we are to consider the attributes of the critic in order to find where he fails in his appraisal of his contemporaries, we must know first that poetry exists in its effect upon the reader. We would say, therefore, that once a critic has done with examining a poem from the technical viewpoint, his duty is not ended as he so often appears to believe; nor is it sufficient for him to analyse the poem psychologically, leading the reader on an irrelevant excursion into the poet's unconscious mind, but it is his function to analyse his own reactions to the poem, and to state its effect upon himself, who is presumably a representative person qualified to interpret its effect upon a perceptive section of humanity.

The reluctance of some critics to make assailable statements may be the reason for a prevalent acceptance of purely technical criticism. We believe, too, that there exists amongst modern critics a dread of being accused of taking a subjective view. Our argument, however, is that there is nothing subjective about a calm and reasonable survey of the effects upon oneself of a poem. It is the effect which is subjective; the appraisal

is an act of objectivity. We assert that the statement: "This poem is offensive to my ear in some way; there is something the matter with its construction—I cannot tell what; I do not understand its meaning either; but it causes a sensation at the pit of my stomach and at the top of my spine that compels me to read it again and again," with its faults of excessive subjectivity is no better than the criticism which deals exclusively with internal rhyme, allover rhythm, underlying form and overriding imagery, and which makes all the usual "objective" noises but fails to deal in any objective way with the essence of the poem, i.e., its effect.

The critic must use his aptitude for technical analysis, not to display merely the making of the poem but to show how the effect is created and to indicate its nature, the poet's experience perpetuated in the poem.

In the judgment of established poetry the modern critic is less likely to confuse cause with effect or to occupy himself with the former at the expense of the latter, for a great number of recorded effects are at the disposal of his reference. When, let us say, *Endymion* was first read to him the critic was conscious of the effect of the poem upon the reader by noticing the latter's facial expressions and the inflections of his voice. The embryo critic may not have agreed that the effect was one worthy of universal presentation, but the question of effect had arisen, and thus from the very nature of our introduction to established poetry we are able to approach it from a just and clear point of view, analysing our reactions to the experiences obtaining from it and finding what aspects of the poem cause the experiences; comparing the effects of different poems one with the other, and basing upon our conclusions our judgment of the poem's value.

The critic has always tended to treat recently-published poetry, however, in quite a different manner, and possibly in his anxiety to give the impression that he is making a strictly objective criticism, achieves about as much success as he would if he were to examine a tear-drop under a microscope in an endeavour to analyse grief.

We shall attempt to show that the critic must, if he is to do justice to his contemporary poets, place himself in the position of a nebulous posterity. No critic of art would consider a painting from a close-up view unless he were investigating certain technical merits or demerits. The case of the literary critic is precisely the same and he must try to survey modern poetry from a decent distance and perspective.

The qualities of the poetic critic, we believe, are the ability to analyse objectively his reactions to a poem; he must have a knowledge of the history of poetry, an interpretive intellect and integrity. It is necessary too, that he should have an ear for music an eye for image and a feeling for structure to enable him to follow the poet's trend of thought. Why then, does he so often wish to add to his burdens by assuming the roles of moralist and philosopher?

We are inclined to say that the literary critic should concern himself not at all with moral principles, for if he once starts, the poet will end by being at the mercy of the private political and religious opinions of the whole Tolstoyan hierarchy of critics. From the critic's point of view, he would find himself floundering in such a bog that his ear for music and eye for image would be stopped up with centuries of controversial mud.

Assuming the critic, as a responsible person, holds a set of principles which, unlike public morals, do not change from age to age and frontier to frontier, refrains from allowing his principles to influence his judgment of poetry ranging over several thousands of years on, for instance, the subject of human violence, he will not interfere with the sentiments of:

"I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." (Moses)

or

"All in the valley of death
Rode the six hundred." (Tennyson)

or

"Red lips are not so red
As the stained stones kissed by the English dead." (Wilfred Owen)

or

"Remember when you hear them beginning to say Freedom,
Look carefully—see who it is that they want you to butcher."
(Alex Comfort)

It is his duty, however, to censure deliberate propaganda, for so complex and confusable are our emotional responses that the possible effect of propaganda through poetry is in almost relative proportion to the effect of the poem. And here the critic must, too, discriminate between the poet who hammers out his doctrines in white hot metal and he who chisels his message on a subtler alloy. Thus the moral attitudes contained or implied in a poem are not inviolate from attack by the critic, if they affect the poem adversely.

Let us assume the appearance of an excellently-contrived poem which extols the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima, placing this act on record as one of the most glorious in the annals of human conflict. The critic who failed at least to remark upon the unwholesome sentiment and its effect upon this fortunately hypothetical poem, would of course be abnormal. It is moreover safe to assume that the poem would be the worse for its moral attitudes, and the question arises of why the poems from which three of the above extracts are taken have not similarly suffered. We believe that an atom bomb poem would fail in its lack of appeal to posterity. Let us examine the others.

The first extract, from the legendary Song of Moses after the deliverance of his people across the Red Sea, deals with man's relationship with a Divinity who had caused the destruction of his enemies. Tennyson, in the

second extract, records the courage of a small company of men in the face of overwhelming odds. The theme of Wilfred Owen's poem, from which the third extract is taken, is the suffering endured by the soldiers in World War I, which, even then, held the potentialities of becoming first a fireside story, later an historical story and finally a legend. The atom bomb poem however, could not possibly express the celebration of those human qualities which redeem the destructive subject-matter of the other three poems. Moreover, the atom bomb so very nearly put an end to all legends, histories, firesides and even critics that the teachers, mothers and (also hypothetical) nursemaids of future generations will be hard put to it to glamorise the episode.

Here is a case where it would be the critic's duty to quarrel on moral grounds with the subject matter of a poem which would be unacceptable to contemporary readers and, as far as he could see, future readers. For endorsement of our principle let us return to Shelley. Referring to some poems by T. L. Peacock which had been sent him to read he wrote "The poems abound with a genius, an information, the power and extent of which I admire, in proportion as I lament the object of their application. Mr. Peacock conceives that commerce is prosperity; that the glory of the British flag is the happiness of the British people; that George III, so far from having been a warrior and a tyrant, has been a patriot. To me it appears otherwise; and I have rigidly accustomed myself not to be seduced by the loveliest eloquence or the sweetest strains to regard with intellectual toleration that which ought not to be tolerated by those who love liberty, truth, and virtue. I mean not to say that Mr. Peacock does not love them; but I mean to say that he regards those means [as] instrumental to their progress, which I regard [as] instrumental to their destruction."

Shelley's remarks quoted at the beginning of this article might have been unjustifiable had his reviewers succeeded in placing themselves fifty years forward in time. But Shelley's standard for critics was high. "The jury" he said "which sits in judgment upon a poem . . . must be composed of his peers."

MURIEL SPARK.

DEAR TIME'S WASTE

My love is changeless but my sorrow grows—
So many days for love pass loveless by;
True love is deathless, every lover knows,
But lovers have no title not to die.

KENNETH HOPKINS.

THE DRESS

Hand-woven of remembered fragments—
here the shining gold of happiness, and here
passion's crimson thread, or dreams' blue wavering—
I made this dress of my desire,
the clothing of my poetry.
Around the hem were tears, and sorrow girdled it,
firm about my waist and beneath my breasts;
the coloured and designless past took on significance
in the wide flow of the years' embroidery,
folds falling together here to make new meaning
or suddenly spreading to magnificence.
And at my throat, as guardians of my maidenhead,
I pinned as brooches men's agonies and dreams.

I will not put it off for womanhood's mortality,
for other clothes of no significance for me;
this I shall wear, as symbol of my poet's longing,
until the earth shall rot it from me in the grave.

MOLLY GILBERT.

CHILD OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Where are you going child of circumstance?
the dusty road bends first to left then right,
the wind frets low and water brims the brook,
the air is dank and no moon rides tonight.

No moon tonight, yet restless still you wander
a stealthy tiger through the darkness creeping,
is it the fox or badger's-hole you search for,
or night's concealing curtain for your weeping?

Since still you weep, although the fearful hearts
that nest in trees and crawl in caves to moan
remain unchanged, tear-drenched in morning light,
whether you share their grief or weep alone.

URSULA STUART LAIRD.

WINTER OF IMPOTENCE

When will the winter of my impotence break?
When will the green blade shoot?
When will the pale, phantasmal dove return
The branch of fire and blossom in its beak?

There was a time when all the world and I
Were clothed in the gold, illusionary gleam
Of the green years' dream:
When Life was a virgin isle,
Swum round by a dark, enchanted sea,
Where each bird, each bush, each rare, exotic flower,
And the high sky mirrored in the changing, changeless sea,
Seemed to conceal a promissory sign: the key
And answer to the spirit's long desire.

But now no magic isle is left unmapped,
No sea uncharted, every wood explored,
The heart picked out of the red, discovered rose,
Paths trod through the mind, the body's flower despoiled,
I freeze in the grip of this winter impotence
And await the bright deliverance of the dove.

* * * *

Surely, in the wilderness, that dove must be?
Though now it is so long ago his heart
Beat in this hand's warm cup, that he spread his wings
To leave the trembling finger's perch
And fly out through the windows of the soul,
I can no longer feel that feathered beat,
Nor see that bead-bright eye, its depth, its shape,
Nor can my blunted fingertips recall
The smooth delight along that velvet nape.

Yet, even in this winter impotence,
There have been sudden omens, auguries,
Predictions of a magical return:
In the paw of the squirrel, burying his store;
In the see-saw trill of the pert, red-breasted bird,
Affirming laughter; in the pool's still depth;
And in the dark-bright eye of love, I read the sign.

And, sleeping, I wait for this frozen year to turn,
When the blade shall shoot, the earth grow green again,
The child be born in the man, the man in the child,
And all these winter doubts be reconciled:
When the ice of my winter impotence shall break,
The world awake, the miraculous dove return.

J. T. Brockway.

TWO POEMS

BY

PAMELA CONSTANTINE

DUSK

The thought-loom turns no more, the drooping thread
Untangles. All the world lies patternless
In sleepy colours. Contours blue from shape,
The ordered ranks of consciousness digress
Like specks of time. A quiet curtain falls,
Steeped in the scent of sleep, a purple shade
Drawn from oblivion. Now the spirit lies
Open, waiting to disintegrate
Like an autumn flower beneath the hands of wind.

AFTER GREAT DISTRESS

This is the cliff of years, I can look down
On the broken promises, the ruins of words;
I can see summer budding over pain,
And darkness from the womb of Time return.
I see the wrecks of thought like petals strewn,
Or moulted feathers of a bird, all dead;
And the wide false bridge of smiles wrought at your death.
I can look down and laugh; for I am old
With wisdom in my cold serenity.

THE MUSIC OF WORDS

The music of words is a silver song
Blown over starlit water when the glades awake
To the soft little feet of the dusk
And the long shades shake . . .

The music of words is a golden strain,
Sad as the summer mourning for her wind-raped rose
In the bird-lovely magic of dawn
In a lane none knows . . .

And beauty rides out on the fragrant air,
Robed in the bright enchantment of a whispering tree,
When they sound with the trumpets of truth
And are fair and free . . .

But their loveliest music the song that stirred
Once, as a breeze from Eden on the sighing strings
Of the heart in the days of the flowers
When each word had wings . . .

NORMAN C. PALLANT.

THE STRANGER

O of the earth unearthly, You,
Why stays that hand on the half-open door?
What hinders—is it your purpose to come through?
Or is it I you beckon come with you?
—What is it, Stranger, you would have me do,
Or with you vanish, or without you fare?

For whom seek I to guide me in this place?
Of whom counsel? Only as ghosts they are.
As you, Stranger. O Stranger, show your face.
Hold yourself not apart, not quite so far.
Never was time so far away as now.
I cannot hear the bell that many a year
Has told me of the night. Yet can I hear
The cock crow, strange as ever and more strange
That sound, than your silence who seem so near.

O you unearthly wise, what of the night's
Harsh lullaby—Is it to sleep again?
Tell me, you ponderous shadow on shut eyes,
In all this range of woodland, fell and plain,
In the flush hollows, on the sun-flown heights,
—Tell me, is there ever to sleep again?
Listen! The neighbouring farmyard's vocal now,
That cockerel—he's a wicked chorister.
That bantam, and the heavy milker's low,
And a girl's sudden cry—who angers her?

Listen! The woodlands rise.
—Stranger, I fancy I will sleep again.
Adieu, Stranger, they want me in the Hall.
I know it is a dream. I know it vain.
Yet let me with the revellers from the ball,
The rustle of loaded garments, and that call,
—Yes, 'tis for me—and you—you have withdrawn
Whose hand I saw, whose voice I never heard,
Only that voice of dawn, that I did hear,
And for that bird-singer I wake again,
His voice I know—those pipers called,
Called me, for them I rise, Stranger, again,
Not, not for you, never because of you,
Who showed one hand, the other did not show,
And what it held, sickle, or Circean cup,
I know not now, only surmise.
'Twas you, stranger, with your riddle of silence,—you.
—What if I give it up?

Listen! When these worldlings have ceased
Calling, I may forget.
But not just now.
At least, not yet.

VIVIAN LOCKE ELLIS.

CHORUSES FROM THE AGAMEMNON

BY

ROSS NICHOLS

And Paris like a child forgetting
the things forbidden, possession and all law,
chased the bright bird his Helen,
robbed Menelaus' nest. Led on by love
by woman's love, his fatal desire is bright
but its false gold blackens at the test of God;
his honour fades. And the foredooming woe
closes on Troy, while longing cleaves
the heart of Menelaus, and Helen's shape
approaches him in dreams, then vanishes
like a bird flying into a shadowy glade.

* * * *

In Agamemnon's ships
they cry for magic of a virgin's blood,
these baffled men of the host, at the prophet's word.
The gods sent winds that bore them ever back,
heavy hostility of heaven; their hearts fell low,
some left the sacred cause, on returning feet
spread the disastrous tale of the wasting winds
off Aulis steep. The grim and ancient custom
mutters, then cries to Agamemnon for blood,
his royal daughter's blood. He would not hear,
yet it must be. Slowly he was subdued
and made to Themis all-obedient
by great Necessity, and a dark wind came
into his breast, a wind of unholy daring.
Blindness was on him, and a woman's laughter
remembered, seemed to him a cause for death,
and Clytaemnestra's mockeries rankle still,
harden him to the slaying of her child
Iphigeneia, to yield his ships relief.

* * * *

Not only in the castle halls of kings
but at each man's own hearth a woman waits
and in her heart sits patience.

Those men she has sent towards Troy, their faces come
before her in her dreams
and over many things she ponders.
But in the returning
comes to the woman only the ash of burning,
a heavy dust that is wet with tears
from the Trojan plain where the war-god changed
the gold of life to darkness.
One by one over the men they weep,
the women praise them each, how one was brave
and nobly died, and one was wise and crafty
in strategies of war.
By the foreign gate
sleep the young and beautiful men, where hate
of her conquerors still burns in burning Troy.
The widowed women of Greece
murmur against those kings who lead to war
so readily across the sea's wide flood.
My heart upon the darkness waits,
for the pride of man shall God destroy
and not unmarked of him is the shedder of blood.

POEM IN JEST

BY

WREY GARDINER

The hurt is in the jest, the mood in the moment
Like a lilac dying in the autumn drought,
Or gold standing in corn, the whole weight of a nation.

This is the light we saw falling on the cliff,
The world flying with the gull's feather,
Nothing and the rock, our time and dream

Weighted with the world's sorrow,
A feather and fear as the saxophone thrills
To the last love and the last dance.

TWO POEMS

BY

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

ADMIT IMPEDIMENT

The impediment is there; time's searing blade
  Tears at all joy that hath its roots in love;
What's said in bliss of passion is gainsaid
  By fear so chill it bears not thinking of.
Thine arms and mine were woven, but in vain;
  My lips to thine were pressed in close desire,
Having no certainty in heart or brain
  Save only that all human joys expire.
Ah, mortal wraith, woman whose golden brow
  Lifts to the stars in pride of love fulfilled,
Too soon tomorrow's yesterday is Now,
  Too soon the fount of ecstasy is spilled;
In strife of love we fail, yet cease not striving
Who have in love our life, in death our living.

EXPERIENCE

Compass a joy unguessed at, ride a flood
  In swan-plumed spate,
Assay a raindrop, count a crystal's blood
  Hueless and delicate;

Chart a lost star, dissect a midge's wings,
  Coiled clouds deflate;
Hear heaven echo when a linnet sings
  Love-stricken to his mate;

Paint pageantry from dream, and from a sigh
  Precipitate
Music that in the secret heart will lie
  Soundless, inviolate.

Let us reach out before our life is done,
  Challenging fate
For one experience beneath the sun
  We dare not formulate.

STATEMENT

I, Jog-trot Johnny,
On Shank's pony
Over grass, gravel
And paved ways travel.

Song's solitary
Why should I vary
My verse for any
Chance tribute-penny?

The theme, the measure
Suffice my leisure.
This testimony
From Jog-trot Johnny.

OLIVER DAVIES.

COLD ECHO

Never seek to give thy love
  More than appetite can hold;
Since the superheated wind
  Groweth insensibly cold.

When I was young I gave my loves,
  I gave them all I knew;
And some were shocked, and some were bored,
  And all so swiftly through.

So soon as I non-suited them
  They held no suit for me;
Turning to suit some substitute
  Gladly and gratefully.

ARTHUR VIVIAN.

TWO POEMS

from the German of Friedrich Hagen

BY

IAN FINLAY

I

Death made me a face of light
and eyes cut from many heavens

and the knowing lips made from love
and the forehead from sufferings

and hands to shout with joy *De Profundis*
and feet going into the depths of the earth.

My body is made from granite from the air
each atom like an amen of my life.

II

Our morning does not call us with rosy fingers
to lukewarm feathers the pigeons swarming white

Our morning is male-like our morning is hard
smelling of smoke of the fires of the works

Our morning lays hold of us its fists on our shoulders
in the midst of the blackened ruins of our night

Our morning dwells among pools of sorrow
where man is going out to look for men.

SEA FLOWERS

Are you budding, you grey sea,
Covering over with tiny green specks
Which will burst, at a sign, into flower,
Into leaf, one flame of emerald?
Swiftly, softly,
Surely,
Comes that bright laurel,
Worn when the sky is wearing
Nothing but blue.

Who can sing your splendour?
Vast in the tempest
Heave your wave-limbs.
Summer
Follows, and see, you sleep
Under the blue flowers,
Alone.

I can never pluck those corn-flowers.
They slip through outstretched hands,
Through the fingers,
And silence remains,
A wonder:
While still the blue flowers are laughing,
Bending
Under the keels of black-tarred boats,
Then up on their stems,
Frothed round with their new, white flower—
And far,
Moon-distant from Man's earth-ways,
Always apart.

ARTHUR BALL.

MY BREATH IS BROKEN

My breath is broken
On invisible walls
That climb the high air
To the turrets and towers of timelessness
In clear, cold, glittering loveliness
Fairer than sun, and fair

As the jewelled town
Jacinth and chrysolite
Where all the planets meet
In a light that is turret and tower and torch,
The innermost room and the outer porch
At the end of the heart's quiet street.

My breath is broken
On invisible walls
That climb the high air.

PÁDRAIG O'HORAN.

MY DESIRES

BY

JOHN REDWOOD ANDERSON

I have desired love, and found it
  Bitter and sweet;
I have lit a halo round it,
  And pierced its hands and feet.

I have desired fame—
  To be known of all men living:
And found it, before it came,
  Not worth the striving.

I have desired beauty—
  If that be desire,
Which guides the soul as duty,
  And burns the heart as fire.

I have desired faith: but believing
  Is the poor privilege of youth;
And faith shows like self-deceiving
  Where only Truth is truth.

I have desired wisdom; and, for teacher,
  Turned to the earth and man's common lot:
I have desired wisdom—but, "like the preacher,
  Found it not."

I have desired that sweet charity
  That loves man and kisses fate:
But O, the rarity
  Of the days I have not known hate!

I have desired holiness,
  And the life that is self-denying:
But the one way thereto is lowliness,
  And that is past my trying.

I have desired life—the saving
  Of day by precious day:
But is life worth the having
  When so much has fallen away?

I have desired death: but I wonder,
  Has death so sharp a knife?
Will he with the one stroke sunder
  Even my soul from life?

And now I desire the ending
  Of desire and the ways I have trod,
And a great light rending
  Earth and revealing God;

For I have grown sick of pursuing
  Emptiness from year's end to year's end:
I would not tire of well-doing,
  Had I God for friend.

So now I pray humbly:
  Lord, listen! a poor man prays.
I will follow Thee, like a dog, dumbly—
  Show me Thy face!

DUALITY

And in the evening (shadows lengthening,
mauve fingers spanning streets) the sky's a dome
imprisoning all—streets, shadows, love and hate,
people and haste and heartache. Strengthening,
broadening shadow's conquest, night glides in
wide-skirted, heavy-breasted, profligate—
virgin and hetaera, learned in weary sin,
with phallic moon for blazon and a foam
of mocking stars. O strange duality—
sky-dome that spans the macrocosmic Shape
wherein these puppets mime a shadow-show,
mind-dome their stage and audience! I hear,
see, touch, adore, profane—and trembling know
how in mind's hinterland the imps of fear
furtively tread, how leers the ancient Ape
caged in God-imaged Man, yet cannot see
beneath which dome exists reality.

MICHAEL REDGROVE.

TWO POEMS

BY

JOHN BAYLISS

NEAR AGRA

We are the watchers of darkness who wait by the river,
and we the camel drivers who wait by the wall.
Open your gate, O city, the moon now wanes,
and the vain winds harry the dust-clouds over the plain.

It is cold, brother, here, and the rags are too few to cover us.
It is cold by the ashes, and darkness today brought sleet;
sleet and fine dust to trammel our eyes and our lungs.
Our only fire is the golden flame of the stars.

Warm lovers in rooms, and you of the party that passed,
gay bridegroom, whose horse cast the snake of the dust at our feet,
will you not now in your joy give us memory,
let but your servant assist the disconsolate?

But there is no answer, and only the railway bell
sounds in the distance, and here the river falls on,
calling the watchers in darkness, the men by the wall,
to the end of life or the rays of the rising sun.

THE STATUES

The statues, striding across the tops of trees,
Tread down dead leaves that fall to the asphalt path.
Heavy as lead they are or Don Juan's avenger.

And now, like a phantom and monstrous messenger,
The first winter fog curls insidiously round the lake
masking small dogs and melancholy girls.

And, dim and cantankerous, two disgruntled cranes
stand in the dusk like unsympathetic guards,
The red-beaked warriors of rancorous campaigns.

And now that there remain only the hardiest birds,
The Gainsborough softness fades swiftly from the Mall
While over the broad Park the statues tread like lords.

NOBLE METALS

Man and woman are of different birth
As moon differs from sun;
The sun turns many faces to earth,
The moon only one.

The sun sheds light on many eyes
And is by none bound,
The moon takes light from one only
And spills it without sound.

Man can love two or three
And forget them and be lonely
And still live; but woman dies
If she love not one only.

T. W. RAMSEY.

ON SEEING A HEDGE-PARER AT WORK

Beneath my window, the blade's mellow stroke
Bleeds the autumnal stillness where branches,
Toppling in waves on a tarred shore, splinter
The brittle thorns and skeletons of leaf
Into these particles of grief
The wind launches
Upon the rising tide of winter.

And you, labourer, whose clubbed feet
Puddle the dyke, what thought does the task evoke?
Do you not hear time's blade
Strike at your arteries, the bitter-sweet
Crumbling of days, the ring of the spade
In a still acre, the shuffling approach of sleep?

How like this foliage of the roadside heap
Your life and mine that wither in a lean time!
At the sound of a chill chime
When, dust to dust,
Our limbs like broken branches rust
In the dark soil, the seed is elsewhere blown.

WILFRED BARTLETT.

THE RIVER

Listen, I have news from the stars:
Clinging there I peered over the rim of the Earth
And with a shoulder leaning out on the sky,
Shouted into the deep void. Hear the reply:
You of the thousand feet fretting the pavement,
Queues on the dusk street from the enslavement
Of cogwheel turning cogwheel,
The cooped river turning the mill-wheel,
Turning in a deep void. Hear the reply.

He will come:
He will come to project the withdrawn passion of the mob
Back into the mob, destroying them;
Welding nerve-fibres to the tungsten-glimmering Weltanshauung
Of bronzed leopard-laughers bathing
In the turgid moon-shimmering waters, churning
And turning the bone-grinding mill-wheel.
He will come to accept the shame,
In the streets all will be the same.
Yet either he or we must die.

There have been hundreds, there shall be
No more.
The streams have fussed over cataracts and the rock-fury
Frustrated waters thundered down the profound waterfall;
The brittle nerves have flickered, flashed and fused;
The brutal mill-race sunk where bronzed, bemused
Laughers lie stark with twisted faces
Staring, staring into the deep void.

And now hanging in the charged suspense
Of crystals growing in solution,
Of cigarette-smoke curling over head-lines
In the queues along the streets,
Are they waiting, are they wanting
Another?
I must bring my news down from the stars,
My shoulder from the sky
And shout to every passer-by:
There have been hundreds, there must be
No more.
The river flows out through a delta to the sea.

IAN BEITH.

SALAMANDER

BY

JOHN WALLER

In Memory of Keith Bullen, Founder and First President of the Salamander Society of Egypt, who died of Typhoid in Cairo on 30 July, 1946.*

The golden petals are at last poured out
In the rich Falstaffian wood;
And never now understood
Is the soul's earnest reaching towards light.

I saw you, friend, on a May morning,
A portly figure in the mist,
About you a surrounding host
Of others who had caught your singing.

Green-haired Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine
Confessing strange passions aloud
To his young friend, Rimbaud,
Followed shyly by Albert Samain.

With these that war-time youth
Whom your kindness helped,
Those who to your voice leapt,
Finding in your age their truth.

So Keith on one eternal Sunday
Will entertain his friends
Gathered from the world's ends,
Wondering what each will say.

Raoul Parme will softly pour out drinks
Murmuring with rich blurred voice,
De Knevett quiet as a mouse—
"A long journey" he thinks.

Fraser's great boom of speech
And Erik's quick crystal flow
Burst over Cromer now
While Gawsworth in a trice

* See *Salamander : A Poetry Miscellany*. Edited by Keith Bullen and John Cromer. (Allen and Unwin 6/-)

Springing poets from every land,
Yergarth, Barbitch, Moscatelli,
Starts a new symphony,
To a foreign king kisses hand.

O, Keith, that you should die
So far from these friendly faces,
In a land of heartless images
And the hot sun scorching the sky.

A land of frequent farewells
That will not remember your gestures
As you remembered departures
Of others and wished them well

With a crazy dinner in a bistro
Or a mad drive to the zoo;
For where placidly humour drove you
With careful precision you'd go.

Losing your money on horses
Or leaning against a bar,
You filled the stage, were the star
In a world of irrelevant verses.

Whether sipping your constant brandy
Or "moving across the road",
You send back sad flavours of good
From your calm yet reckless memory.

A kind soul placidly moving,
Large moon in a children's night
Where all simple pleasures were bright
And the poet's romantic living.

THE TINY VOICES

Tomorrow, O tomorrow
men may walk as gods
upon the green and lovely lawns
where, yesterday, village-girls danced
and to-day's grey granite
casts its menace across the eager grass.

But gods have the habit
of speaking from the mouths of guns,
and too often we have seen
them crowned upon the flaming pyre
of a million dead hopes.
Shall we then accept
tomorrow as the perennial coin—
whose counterfeit, only, we have known?

Sure feet on the path of evolution
we have climbed to the cliff's edge,
knowing only a thirst for the sea;
knowing no premonition of disaster
except from the tiny voices of eternity.

O tomorrow, surely, we shall find some
answer to the rocks, shall reach
the sea despite their violent hands:
and we then, crowned as kings, transcend
even the sea that first stirred our imaginings!

O be patient, Sons of Men!—for history cannot
withstand us forever, and even the cold
fingers of the tomb succumb, tomorrow,
to another birth.

LIONEL MONTEITH.

THE LAUGHTER OF TALIESIN

I

Propounding riddles for the holy laughter of God,
And the confounding waters of the early world
Lapping my drowned soul, I have answered you:
I had no answer clearer than the tree,
The toad, the liquid artifice of rain,
The primordial blue-bell affirming me
Yearly in beauty and death. Should I take
Light from the blind gods' eyes and so bestow
The high prerogative wantonly?
I am more than the branch and the leaf
And the life; more than the jewel and the bent
Form of croaking argument; more than the fall

And the lull; more than all to be seen
In the green blue-stippled.
When rain shall grow
Slim on a spring-stem, and the blue-bell fall
From the flowering cloud; when the tree shall crawl
With shining brow; and the toad shall sprout
To a maze of boughs, I too shall be literal.
Handling these symbols of laughter, consider
How many tears tempt a god to laughter.
Propounding riddles for the holy laughter of God,
With gravity I have answered you—with tears.

II

All summer long the kings of laughter go
And I, autumnal, am the coloured clown,
The rainbow jester tumbling out of sorrow
Into rude parti-mantled merriment.
My weaving fingers have an osier skill
To take the willow of a bending soul
And curve the slippery wands within, without,
Until the weeping-man's an ornament
To set upon the shelves of capitals.
Day-long I antic in the reading room
To see the worm advancing unreproved.
And I am moved to shaking hells of mirth
At knowledge masquerading me to doom:
For I was cantref-wide to many a reign
Hysteric with a greater fall than this,
When my plain folly rocked even death to sleep
Insidiously, and none there felt the blow.
Wrapped in my calf-skin, I dissect the kiss
From the betrayal, and the humour of it
Shatters the shelves and the capitals,
The whole dead world of summer which within
All laughter-long the kings of sorrow go.

III

The cautery of laughter seals my veins
And burst the heart a beat or two ago,
The bone grins as the worn flesh drops away
Leaving the anatomy of joy exposed
In the closed restricted skull, the cavity
Of emotion framing half-dismembered joys:
But in the voice, if yet remembered, lay

The secret of that laughter leaved in trees,
And the hoarse toad-note-music monotone,
And blur-rhythm of rain on swilling glass,
And the pursuing melody of the blue-bell
Persistently uttering defiance of the will
To death, of the importunate life that lags
Beyond summer. Like an old man who drags
His years in the reluctant procession
To repentance, I do not truly repent,
But am to be heard chuckling softer now
In my vicarious brothers as they go,
Light graceless riddles through their laughter-round,
Sound into dreams and dreams into sound:
In a god's conscience are un-numbered years—
I have answered with laughter—I am answered with tears.

CYRIL HUGHES.

THE HEADLANDS

A Sequence

BY

HOWARD SERGEANT

I

THERE IS A SEA . . .

There is a sea (and I have learned its wiles)
whose smoking fingers fumble with the dead,
leaving their bright bones perched high on sea-walls,
or excalibured in rock; where broken shells
tell only of a weather in the head.

There is a sea (white combers fall to foam
in my hard skull) whose waters shelter all
half-haloed creatures, cripples of the womb;
and pyrosomes with lamps rigged in their frame
light up the sealogged forests of tree-coral.

There is a sea (O winds be gentle and
O watermeads be clear) with fountain heads
in cradles, salty mouths at every wound.

And death is never final for the drowned
who nestle flounders in these unfathomed beds.

Always the hunted, always the hound: green
eye at all keyholes; cold hand taking note
of fable and fossil, and wild goose skein,
the petrel's underground nest in the brain—
nothing is lost where the sea loads its net.

II

The Sea-Dwellers

Have you not seen them rising from the waves
at midnight, when the gulls are silent and
the sea opens its doors and watery graves;
have you not seen them swirling on the sand
like corybants, their white malignant thighs
whispering from the mirrors of the moon;
whose phosphorescent eyes are never eyes
but knives to turn the flesh and strip the bone?

Or even at noontide when the sun lends
your otherwise grey a gay and yellow light,
have you not felt the twitching of their hands
upon your shoulders, footprints on your heart?

Whatever tides are swung, have you not heard
their voices bubbling through the surfaced word?

III

Beach-Head

O the waters I know will encompass my dead
  and drum them to folly, green tide after
tide to shore up their limbs in the warmth of my bed;
  waves will deliver them and drive them to rafter
with ravens, tide-tongued in my head.

But I am not Moses to meddle with oceans,
  and this rod in my hand is not God
to my wrist, my flesh is not finned. Emotions
  are fellowed by minnows and the cephalopod
preys on my tongue-tied devotions.

IV

Mapping the Shores . . .

Mapping the shores of childhood, water held
no manshaped monsters poised beneath the tide,
no caricatures of less-than-me compelled
the hoisting of my least breath of a hide-
me-O-my-Saviour to the masthead's height.
Then waves gave up tall heroes, and all their
gods were me in a kindlier leading light;
the fairy tale sea bred miracles set fair
to fetch my thirstlong eye; and where the beach
was free of the wraiths and their samphire hands
that harass me now, at a finger's reach
what mantic childscapes castled from the sands.
Yet deep within my channelled skull, the sea
already carved the man's identity.

V

This Was My Soviet

There are so many islands to discover
beyond the headlands, blindfolded in mist.
So many drowned seabeaches to deliver
from the green angers of the sea: and most
I mourn the early castle towns, the coiled
thoroughfares laid in shingle and white-eyed stones—
pavements more spectacular than any gold
of London, and no less rare—flanked by groynes
and breakwaters firm as a mother's arm,
and spiralling up to the bell-towers that
steepled my hopes, held fast my secrets from
the eavesdropping air.

This was my soviet
of heart and limb extemporised in sand
and there, proud among banners, I was lord
of the singing turrets, crony of the wind;
would raise my bridges against the dark word
of sorrow. Then time was always a well-meaning
uncle with bachelor shillings to waste
in haste; and always the weather was morning,
to be borne like a hawk upon my wrist.
Waves were my allies in a land of moats
and canals, crinkled as an old man's hand,

and all days were thriftless. Only the nights
held voices, but words found no perch in the mind.

VI

The Islands

O I have heard them plotting underground,
the clown-faced puffins, listened to their banter
at the mouths of burrows over the strand—
this is the circus I may never enter;
this is the darkness rising in the mind.

And often, peering into shallow craters
left by the tide on a sunny afternoon,
have found an apparition in the waters,
have known another image than my own
speak with my voice and travesty my features.

And still they menace me with dolphin backs
on silent evenings when the light is strong—
there are so many islands piled with wrecks,
so many answers now where cormorants hang
their steel-blue question-marks upon the rocks.

VII

Sandcastle Days

Call not for the sandcastle days;
the towers line the sea's wide throat
and currents slide along the moat
to build a mackerel's waterways.

Lost the measured mile to school,
the apple trees, the contraband
selected by the same swift hand
that launched great liners on the pool.

Ruined now, beyond repair,
the swingboats and the roundabout
that dragoned half a wingtime out;
and ghosts are gypsies at the fair.

Where are those bright gypsies now,
the pool, the school, the applehand?
under the wavelapped rock, to land
like night-crabs when the tides allow.

VIII

The Heart Must Salvage

Raise no voice against the sea,
the falling wave, the furious tide
that wrecked the castles where all pride
was turreted in infancy.

Raise no hand to hold the wind,
the leaflight breath, the lashing gale
that stripped child-freighters, sail by sail
and tore the moorings from the mind.

Neither hand nor voice of man
retrieve the lost from wind and wave:
only the coastguard brain may save
and heart must salvage what it can.

IX

The Hands of Water

How many memories the waters bruise
beneath the rocks, beneath the sand,
beneath capricious hands that break my bread

and dole me stones or visions as they choose,
that drive the flotsam fears to land;
how many dreams are anchored in my head,

miming the flowering sea-worm's gestures of
sortie and retreat! Always they
elude me, yet I know they move below

the surface; winds lift their laughter above
my own, and in the sundrenched bay
when dunes wear diamonds and the tide is low,

they leave their bleached mementoes where the turnstones grub among the tangled weeds
and scribble questions underneath the pebbles.

They have their entrances but take no calls, learn
no rhetoric to plant their seeds
and where they march the earth is lashed with fables.

At the pluming of a wave, or the rush
of swallows down the river pitch,
they leap upon the headlands in a shoal

of light, they conjure from the soil a bush
pyramidal with fire, and each
leaf is a flame coiling through the cold skull.

They have lusts; they have eloquent bells, swung
far from the nightmare kingdoms back
to ring the boys of daylight to their schools,

and all their bells are clappered by my tongue.
They know my ways and, houndwise, track
me down to my promiscuous drinking-pools.

Having scattered their portents on the hedges
and trees, having like Lazarus
disturbed the living with a tomb-bright light,

the wave ebbs suddenly to silent ledges,
swallows are lost to the nebulous
dark, and there is nothing left but the weight

of measured breathing, the intimate rise
and fall of the breast of the sea:
I am abandoned like starfish on the sand.

Watching the terrible hands of water is
never to forget their history,
their power over the dry and tidemarked land.

NOTE.—*The opinions expressed in the following articles, reviews and letters are not necessarily those of the Editor.*

NEW CONTEMPORARY POETRY

REVIEWED BY HOWARD SERGEANT

The Immortal Ease, Theodore Nicholl (Hutchinson, 6s.); *Rage of Days.* Olga Levertoff (Hutchinson, 6s.); *Songs from a Lake,* Rachael Bates (Hutchinson, 6s.); *Pines on the Hill,* Gladys M. Haines (Hutchinson, 6s.); *The Piper,* Michael Gardner (Williams & Norgate, 2s. 6d.); *Children of the Century,* Alan Moray Williams (Muller, 6s.); *Amidst Life's Pageantry,* Elizabeth Browne (Torch Press, New York, $2.00), *Never Despair of Gardens,* Gloria Komai (Sylvan Press, 3s. 6d.); *A Nottingham Anthology of Original Poetry,* compiled by Lilian Roworth (The Poetry Society, Nottingham, 2s.); *Poems,* Rudolf Nassauer (Methuen, 6s.); *Burr Oaks,* Richard Eberhart (Chatto & Windus, 6s.); *Oxford Poetry, 1947,* edited by Martin Starkie and Roy Macnab (Blackwell, 3s. 6d.); *The Defeated,* P. D. Cummins (Macmillan, 5s.); *Look to the Sun,* Weston McDaniel (Beechhurst Press, New York); *The Gallant Sailor,* Commander W. C. A. Robson (De La More Press, 5s.); *The Drunken Sailor,* Joyce Cary (Michael Joseph, 6s.); *Trial of a Poet,* Karl Shapiro (Reynold & Hitchcock, New York, $2.00); *The Drowned Sailor,* James Kirkup (Grey Walls Press, 6s.).

THE FOUR books from Hutchinson have all been chosen for publication as prizewinners in the United Nations Literary Competition. Taking into account the large number of entrants, the valuable prizes offered, and the publicity given to the Competition in national newspapers and periodicals, one might, with some justification, have anticipated work of an exceptional quality if not indicative of genius. Readers with such expectations will be disillusioned. These books have one feature in common—simplicity; but simplicity, by itself, has little virtue unless the poet has something to say that is worth saying. First among the four poets in question is Mr. Theodore Nicholl for his freshness of thought and the unusual slant he gives on subjects which have been considerably overworked during the past few years. The majority of the poems in his book, *The Immortal Ease,* are concerned with aspects of war—parades,

air-raid warnings, aerodromes, hospitals, battle, victory and death—and it says a great deal for his originality that one's interest is not only retained but heightened to a new degree. There is force but no misdirected bitterness. Sometimes Mr. Nicholl leads one to believe that he revels in slaughter:

> " . . . . he died, and I rose glorified
> with victory, calling aloud in glee; crumpled, his carcase
> turned, and rushed down to the watchful sea."

> "I am at war! and the warring world
> is little compared to my tigerish rage,"

and, oddly enough (for the real poet must inevitably see the universal implications) it is only when death touches his immediate comrades that he displays any sense of human sympathy:

> "I would have broken every casket in my heart
> to anoint his head . . . ."

It is in the poems with no direct bearing upon war, like *Yellow Witch,* that his talent is discernible.

Miss Olga Levertoff would be more acceptable if her book, *Rage of Days,* possessed the same urgency as Mr. Nicholl's. Admittedly she has a wider understanding of wartime problems and their impact upon mankind in general, and she experiences a warmer feeling for people outside her own private circles, yet her thoughts are clothed in a vocabulary that is far from convincing. Her religious poems, however, have both vigour and fluency. In *The Complaint* (*All Fools Day Falling in Holy Week*) she takes a slightly unorthodox line:

> "This fool of God who rears his cross
> audacious to the unanswering sky—
> has he no sense to save such loss,
> no wit that warns him not to die?"

Songs from the Lake and *Pines on the Hill* are curiously alike. Both Miss Bates and Miss Haines take an intense delight in nature and speak ecstatically of hills, trees, birds, flowers, and the seasons. They differ only in their approach; whereas Miss Bates tends to project her human emotions into natural sights and sounds:

> "I am earth's sorrow, said the wind,
> And I have felt the young men sigh

Their green life out and, sighing, die—
And how should I be still? said the wind.

and is often moved into a mystical state of contemplation, Miss Haines is content merely to observe and record. Both have a good sense of form and their verse makes pleasant reading. A stanza from Miss Haines' *Caroline Place* is appropriate as a description of their work:

"It doesn't lead you to anywhere:
It hasn't a pub or a shop at all,—
It's simply quiet and green and small:
And it keeps to itself, for it's rather shy
Of the big wide streets where the crowds go by."

The slim volume entitled *The Piper* is the first book of Mr. Michael Gardner and, like most first books, the standard varies considerably from poem to poem. If the writing is uneven and, at times, prosaic, the author has a delicate sensitivity and a feeling for words which enable him to formulate his ideas with precision:

"The World's lips are red, and where
They bury kisses leaps a wound to life."

Emotion is carefully controlled and there is no attempt to hold the reader's attention by rhetoric or sensational devices. Nor does Mr. Gardner moralise. What he has to say is said in the modest tone of a man who has travelled widely and is self-confident in his knowledge, both of himself and his fellow-travellers. At his worst, as in *Voyages,* which is spoiled by the recurrent "I stayed, you went" or "You went, I stayed" motif, he is readable; at his best, as in Truth, he is noteworthy:

"Truth has a face and so must turn one way,
And those who sweep its forehead with their eyes
Must mirror each the crags and the ravines,
The tousled waterfall and the combed grass,
Or, as a legate without his lord's credentials,
Though on his knees, Truth will not recognise."

The relationship between the poet and his readers (or, preferably, his audience) has been the subject of bitter controversy during the last few years. On the one hand are to be found those poets and critics who contend that, as so very few members of the general public read poetry at all, the modern poet must necessarily restrict himself to a specialised audience; and on the other, those who maintain that poetry should be written which can be appreciated and enjoyed by the "ordinary people."

In theory, the latter view is commendable in that it aims at reaching a wider public than is provided by the highbrows—though one might object that the poet must write from his own experience and not from any assumption of what the people want; in practice, one finds that most of these self-styled "poets of the people" seem to be under the impression that their public has neither taste nor intelligence. For them, rhetoric, sentimentality and political emotion usually takes the place of true poetry. However, one should not overlook their difficulties, for they are deliberately attempting to compete with all the commercialised entertainments of modern society, and Mr. Frank Sinatra and Miss Betty Grable certainly have more to offer on that level. Lorca is, perhaps, the only modern poet who has succeeded in drawing upon the actual life of the people for his material; but it should be remembered that, in doing so he was also able to draw upon a vital folk-culture. The Spanish peasants of Lorca's day, with their folk-songs and traditional customs, were a very different audience from the factory hands and clerks of industrialised Britain. The problem for us has yet to be solved.

Mr. Alan Moray Williams is the latest claimant to the title of "poet of the people". The publishers of his book, *Children of the Century*, announce that his poems answer the challenge that "there is no man singing today as men speak in the streets." Who are these men in the streets? Is this their language?—

> "O what will happen after the war—
> Will it all be just as it was before,
> And the men come back, the war-torn men,
> And there not be any jobs for them?
> Will the profiteers and the wealthy few
> Have pinched all the cash—and the women, too—
> And the likes of us have nothing to do,
> And the 'heroes' just sell bootlaces?"

Perhaps it is, but it raises some doubt as to the desirability of singing in it. Like other proletarian poets, Mr. Williams makes the most of such slogans as "The Rich, the Rich have gone to seed", and such hackneyed clichés as "Life's not always December" or "When the clouds close in again", and even if one sympathises with his politically-inspired statements, it is impossible to regard them as poetry. His material is badly digested, if digested at all:

> "I will not go, I will not go
> To the X.Y.Z. Hotel,
> Where the get-rich-get-rich-quick men go
> And the women hunt like Hell.
> I will not go, I will not go

To that Rich Man's Paradise
Where the very air
Is as thick as hair
With lechery and lies,"

Mr. Williams is obsessed by his hatred of The Rich. Someone ought to tell him that plutocrats went out years ago (or is he thinking of the Chairman of the Coal Board?) Still, he tries hard to be fair:

"It's true the British poorer-paid
Have claims that long for justice cried—
Yet what fairminded judge could say
All faults were on the Rich Man's side?"

There are a number of poems which rise above this standard, principally in the section devoted to translations from the Russian. Mr. Williams is a well-known authority on the Russian poets and one might wish that he had reserved more space for the translations at the expense of neglecting his own work. His disapproval of the rich is equalled by his admiration for the Russian people. Writing of his countrymen, he says:

"Dull as a goods-train is the queue;
The men and the young women, too.

The men all cynical—and soured:
What zest of youth they had—deflowered.

The girls—with garish fingertips
And little, selfish, slits of lips."

and concludes:

"Christ, for a breath of something *real*
To stir these folk, and make them FEEL!

Like Russians felt, whose eyes unfurled
A vision of another world . . . . "

How wonderful to live in Russia where there are no queues and the people FEEL!

The Bookfellows are proud of Miss Elizabeth Browne's ninth book, *Amidst Life's Pageantry:* "We are happy about it because we know, like the others, it will leave the reader a little finer person than it found him

and I really mean this—for they do inspire you to try for something better . . . ." Now humour can be extremely inspiring, and I would advise prospective readers not to be put off by the solid appearance of the book, nor by the obvious fact that Miss Browne intended her work to be soul-stirring. For instance, the title poem tells of twin brothers who enlist for World War II—Bert is killed in action and, quite naturally, David is upset about it:

"The Captain sent for me and said:
'I know, my lad, you are seeing . . . . red,
But wouldn't your Mother say, David be true
Stick to your comrades and see it through.

If the tears gush out, just let them fall
And you will feel better in no time at all'.
So on the shoulder of this brave, strong man,
I cried . . . . as only a broken heart can."

No doubt the brave, strong Captains in the American Army of Miss Browne's conception had shoulders more receptive than their counterparts in the British Forces. Or read the sad tale of Lord Stivert's dear son who, in an unguarded moment murdered his girl-friend:

"The jury wiped away their tears
When they heard this brave young lover
Tell how things went black with him
When he heard there was another.

How his sweetheart had been—untrue,
Yet she hoped he would try to forgive,
Now far, far too late, he was sorry
For he should have let her live . . . ."

Of course, gems of this type are not to be found on every page. There are many serious poems which really are. Readers should obtain the book for themselves and be inspired "to try for something better."

Miss Gloria Komai's book, *Never Despair of Gardens*, deserved a more durable format than that provided by the Sylvan Press. I have read many of these poems in the various magazines in which they first appeared and I have always been impressed by the strange atmosphere she creates. It is as if, for the period of reading at least, time is held in suspense:

"In this astonished hour no clock dare strike,
The green sleep of the river and the dream

Of swans unbroken in the sweep of noon,
The willow's tears unfallen and the smile
Of summer lying on the lips of Time."

At present her work is far too fragmentary to have intrinsic value. Few of the poems included in this book show any sign of development and Miss Komai seems to rely entirely upon her capacity for painting delicate word-pictures; but how striking some of them are:

"The night is Greek, a goddess walking, draped
In moonlight fastened by a single star."

(If I were a psycho-analyst I might explain the significance of her frequent use of the night image). Yet in spite of the skilful accumulation of images and the rich poetic language, there is little or no movement and the reader is brought back to earth with a vague feeling of disappointment. When the poem is complete within itself and the imagery is sustained (as in the lovely *Invocation* given below) Miss Komai makes the most of her genuine talent:

"My mood is your reception. As a ship
Sail into me. Your cargo is the South
For my unloading. Like a giant shell
The harbour lies. Your coming brings the sound
Of foreign breakers beaten into foam,
The lapis-lazuli of lazy seas;
Or the doomed echo of a buried bell
Aching within the drowned cathedral's skull;
Or the fierce broken passion of the surf
Dragging the galleon down to the deep
Where glimmers gold like half-closed eyes of sun.
This is the haven of the merchant winds
Where in the sleeping sail the hurricane
Is a forgotten whisper and the teeth
Of crags snap angrily at jeering gulls.
O stay in me until I hear the cry
Of terrible and lovely distances,
Until my veins be filled with voyaging,
My fingers span the continent, my lips
Know salt of lucid oceans, and my eyes
Follow your flying speed surpassing flight,
Your naked heavens and your Southern Cross."

The Nottingham Branch of the Poetry Society is to be congratulated upon its recent anthology by local members. With publications of this

kind it is not normal to find such a consistent level of quality, mainly because every member of the group (however weak) has to be represented, and the result is a collection of second-rate verse through which the reader has to struggle for the few poems worth reading. In this case, however, the compilation has been wisely done. The forceful poem, *Depth Charge,* by Ronald C. Gill, is first in the booklet:

"The sea flowers in strange blossoms,
Anemones of whiteness, unfolding sudden petals
Dewed and crisp from the green heart of the wave
And for one second, carved from eternity,
Heavy with silence, the flower is fadeless
And the sea listens—
To a throbbing beat in its heart
To an alien pulse in its veins."

Other notable poems are by Margery Smith, Brian Walker, Marjorie Darrington, Dorothy Woodcock and Madge Hales.

Much nonsense has been said, written, and shouted from the housetops concerning the obscurity of modern poetry, and the persistent feud between the "moderns" and "traditionalists" has increased the confusion. There can be no doubt that supporters of both schools have been guilty of intolerance, prejudice and misunderstanding, and that many of the critics have evaded their responsibilities by depending too much upon the labels "modern" or "traditionalist" in assessing the work of contemporary poets. Meanwhile, any young writer who imitated a few technical characteristics of Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, Pound, Dylan Thomas, or George Barker, passed as a modern; similarly, anyone who achieved a rhyme became a traditionalist. Obscurity may arise from a number of causes amongst which are (1) the complexity of content, (2) the erudition of the poet, or (3) when it is decidedly objectionable, a deliberate attempt to conceal the fact that the writer has neither imagination nor skill. *Poems,* by Mr. Rudolf Nassauer, is a case in point. The author has adopted all the typical mannerisms of syntax:

"Under above all
feet, (the face of rest)"

"Ago I sensed you in the roses of children;"

"Towards or who was the voice?"

and the usual crop of compound words: "no-sun-season", "male-sweat-bubble cries", "one-above-season", "one-above-womb", "female-Roman-

rod", and "genesis-beauty", etc., but one must not judge by these. Is there anything inside the shell? Unfortunately not. After one has thoroughly mastered the "sweating gut", the "splintered tongue", the "screaming breasts", the "songing voice", the "handless language", and the "handless uncreation without feet", one is left with precisely nothing. Mr. Nassauer is not even a craftsman; the same formation of words (how he loves them) and phrases appear with such regularity as to be tiresomely monotonous, regardless of the sensational juxtapositions like "rope of the sea-king's peopled sea", rose-soft river of the tear-bed", and "sold Joseph of my father's sons". Like Dylan Thomas, by whom he has been strongly influenced, he is "struggling from darkness toward some measure of light"; unlike Thomas, who is an outstanding poet with gifts beyond the artifices of personal style (and the style is at least his own), Mr. Nassauer is struggling in the wrong direction. He should remember when delving in the unconscious that the mind often reveals more than is intended—his own words are "This in me fakes the sun". I am inclined to agree.

Mr. Richard Eberhart, another American poet, also prefers the modern idiom, yet how different is his latest book, *Burr Oaks*, from the previous one. What difficulties there are in his work, which is reminiscent of the Metaphysicals, are due to the intellectual nature of his material and the concentration of his imagery. There is always a line of communication maintained beneath the surface of the poem and one's patience is amply rewarded. Mr. Eberhart has a mature philosophy and a language refreshing for its tautness.

After a lapse of four or five years, *Oxford Poetry* makes its appearance once again and will be welcomed by all who study the latest trends. Not that there is anything spectacular about this collection. The general level is high and there is a complete absence of the bone-dry intellectualism and syntactical confusion which one noticed in earlier collections. Whether or not it is due to the personal inclinations of the editors, almost all the contributions to this issue have a lyrical note that is attractive. Of the thirty odd poems included, the work of Roger Lancelyn Green, Francis King, and Michael Meyer is impressive. Of the lesser-known writers, Guy Butler, Gordon Swaine, and Ian Bancroft have the widest appeal. I quote from the latter's poem *Funeral:*

> "They closed his wounds with water,
> Sealed their sad story by the trembling kiss
> Of the hero's silent lady. Driftwood,
> Bubbling with pitch, made the final emphasis
> For one whose death had crowned a day-long slaughter."

Those who insist that poetry should be in strictly traditional form will enjoy *The Defeated* by Miss P. D. Cummins. It will be even more enjoyed by those who, like myself, appreciate genuine poetry in whatever form it comes. There are few poets who can so effectively combine a rigid sense of discipline with an easy flow of liquid, musical language that never once becomes stilted. Miss Cummins is a subtle poet and knows how to control a sonnet. The *Sequence for W.M.H.* is written around a difficult theme and contains some of the strongest poems in the book:

"Shall I condemn you for the spirit's waste,
Your kisses with no savour and no taste,
The dry and acrid heat of your desire
That has no spark of the authentic fire?
The shame is mine since thought refused consent
To this dull rape, to precious coinage spent
On pseudo-solace, trading love for lust,
That chain-store diamond glittering in the dust.
By this same token I am self-destroyed,
By coupling with you who are null and void,
Who have no conscious meaning or design,
No climbing passion that can match with mine.
Take your delight of me that is at most
A second snatched from the intruding host.
Take your delight of me and never heed
The dark and secret wound from which I bleed.
Take your delight of me and go exempt
From ecstasy, from hatred, from contempt."

The long poem is one of the severest tests for the poet. Nothing so clearly discovers his weaknesses. It may be that the chosen theme is not momentous enough to withstand the strain of comprehensive treatment or that the poet is unable to sustain the original flow of inspiration. Whatever the reason, few long poems or sequences are ever achieved capable of bearing the strong light of criticism. Although *Look to the Sun*, by Mr. Weston McDaniell, falls into neither of the categories mentioned above, it is, nevertheless, unsuccessful as a sequence because the separate poems are not sufficiently integrated with the central idea, the intolerance of man. Accepting this book as a number of lyrics and cameos, each distinct yet having some pertinence to the subject under consideration, one is immediately captivated by its sincerity and richness of colour. The various forms of intolerance—mass hysteria, anti-semitism, race hatred, sex inhibitions, etc.—to which man is disposed are symbolised as witchcraft and attacked with great feeling:

"Night wears a hangman's hood
And the tall oak withers
In the terror of dark.

Night and the mob
Drag John from his bed,
Night and the dark violence of the mob
Wipe prayers from his breath."

With his words the author would shake us out of indifference and complacency. There is a mixture of Whitman and Sandburg in his philosophical outlook, especially in his gospel of human brotherhood and understanding; in technique he follows the Imagist School, which may account for the lack of unification in his work.

The Gallant Sailor, "gripping verses by a real sailor", will revive some precious memories for those who have shared with its author that mysterious urge for the life at sea. Tankers, Raiders, E-Boats, Sweepers, Geordie Boats, Whaling Steamers and other types of craft drift with easy motion through the wavelike stanzas of this book. The liberal sprinkling of capitals serves to invalidate rather than emphasise the strength of such words as Glory, Endurance, Renown and Fortitude, and Commander Robson frequently takes the risk of sounding precious. There is a note of sincerity which cannot be entirely disregarded:

"What is beyond the skyline did you say,
And what the lure beyond the ocean's rim
That Man, the wanderer since ages dim
Seeks still;"

When the Commander forgets to be a "real sailor", as in the philosophical work, he is a truer poet.

The Drunken Sailor is a very different character. Where Commander Robson writes like a bluff old sea-dog with a good natured contempt for the landlubbers and is completely unconscious of the social problems disrupting civilization today, Mr. Cary goes right to the heart of the matter with penetrating vision. His sailor, in fact, is not a sailor at all but a symbolic figure, "a kind of Flying Dutchman, condemned to wander forever through the storms of the world." He is Everyman, sailing the ship of freedom through the seas of government, and his crew consists of dreamers, thinkers, artists, and men of imagination:

"Oh give me lost souls, give me brash
Swankers ruined with panache

Whose wits were all their cash,
Imagination's young apache,
Poets, spellbinders primed to flash
The tale,
That sings them into hell and out of gaol . . . ."

whose greatest weakness, as Mr. Cary sees it, lies in their lack of unity when attacked by the battleship of authority.

"And when the shell screams by our mizzen mast
The watch on deck but listens for the blast
In silence, till remote,
A pop-gun note,
It sounds, then scarcely turns a head
To watch the ripples spread
Across each water hill
To lap our side while still
We drift and spill."

Only when the limit is reached—when the enemy's boathook actually grapples their craft—is there any hope of common action in the cause of individual liberty. Mr. Cary is shrewd enough to point out that the various structures of government are originally conceived by men of imagination, and that it is the idea of justice and humanitarianism which first sets up the authority capable of destroying man.

There are a number of subsidiary themes in this "ballad-epic" but the principal consideration is that of the conflict between the individual and society—a vital subject which affects us all at a time when spiritual values are in danger of being rejected. As a poem *The Drunken Sailor* fails because of the inadequacy of Mr. Cary's language and his more scrupulous concern with ideas than the means of expressing them. It is, nevertheless, a successful failure in that it serves to focus our attention upon the need for a deeper sense of personal responsibility in the individual.

Since Auden moved to the other side of the Atlantic he has exerted a tremendous influence upon young American poets. So much is this the case that books coming from the United States often seem dated, for the Auden period over here expired in the early 'Forties (there are a few English disciples left, but their faith has been sadly undermined). Mr. Karl Shapiro has assimilated Auden more thoroughly than his American contemporaries and he has always a valid experience of his own to offer. Even when the influence is most in evidence, as in the first section of his *Trial of a Poet*, it is not obtrusive and does nothing to detract from the virility of his work. He is a keen student of social conditions, adopting a

satirical approach which is admirably suited to his purpose; at times, it leads him into such banalities as:

"Doctor, doctor, a little of your love
And a little of your skill,
I can no longer sight my gun
No longer can I kill."

The book is divided into three sections: *Recapitulations,* a series of autobiographical poems; *The Progress of Faust,* 16 poems on a variety of subjects; and the title poem in dialogue form concerned with the position of the poet in society. The two prose poems show Mr. Shapiro in an unusual light.

Of the 18 books in my present list *The Drowned Sailor,* by Mr. James Kirkup, is the most outstanding achievement, and I warmly recommend this volume as an example of recent poetry at its most original and best. Mr. Kirkup's poems, and the long poems in particular, have a technical excellence and a dreamlike quality that is dynamic—dynamic not in the mere force of language, for he is soft-spoken, but in the complete seizure of one's intellect and emotions as if one is being carried with the poet in his dream-state:

"I, a walking dream, stand at the centre of the earth,
and my many hands of stone
touch everywhere its surface,
and my fingers reaching all ways
wear the tropics like a ring.

Mr. Kirkup is by no means an easy poet. That is not due to any distortion of syntax or esoteric references in his work. It is rather that his imagination, probing the lower stratum of the mind, creates an air of mystery, almost of revelation, to a world scarcely attuned. As Jung wrote: "Poets are the first in their time to divine the darkly moving, mysterious currents, and to express them according to the limits of their capacity in more or less speaking symbols. They make known, like true prophets, the deep motions of the collective unconscious . . . ." In his own individual way, Mr. Kirkup produces collective symbols (or cosmic shapes, as he calls them) such as the Sailor, the Gardener and the Sleeper, which can be equated with the mythical figures of Ulysses, Proserpine, Orpheus and others. *The Sleeper in the Earth,* for instance, follows the seasonal cycle. There is the *Descent:*

"the sleeper founders,
sinking with all

hands, with more
than dream-precision
to the place prepared
for him alone, the bed
curtained in earth
canopied in stone
from which he may not climb
until the time is come,
until the moment's
necessary pain
contracts its bitter star,
until the given sign"

and the *Resurrection:*

"For here, O here I glimmer into waking, I, the living
man, and I begin now to be whole again,
and gradually hope and fear
draw their scarlet threads along
one trembling vein, and through my life's eye.
And in my ready heart
an obscure knocking comes, and from my still-sealed lids
the first tear is pulled, and life in me returns."

It is impossible to do justice to this fine poem by the few brief extracts I have been able to give. The title poem and the *Elegy for a Dead Gardener* are equally polished, though all the shorter poems have not the same compelling force. Occasionally one hears echoes of Rilke and Eliot, but they are never more than echoes. This volume has the further distinction of being well-produced; I detect the expert guidance of Mr. Sean Jennett who must surely be one of our best typographers. I hope that *The Drowned Sailor* will have the circulation it deserves.

A SURVEY

By ROBERT ARMSTRONG

There is a growing enthusiasm for poetic plays, exemplified by the success of "Happy as Larry" by Donagh McDonagh at the Mercury Theatre under the direction of Martin Browne. This point had been made with a wealth of illustration by Ronald Duncan, the author of "This Way to the Tomb", in his Sunday debate with Stephen Murray, the actor, on the place of the poet in the theatre. The conventional misunderstanding—that the poet tangles the plot in a maze of words and a profusion of images that halt the action—was effectively countered by Ronald Duncan. He postulated as an axiom that poetry implies an economy of words. By word selection at its zenith, and by the use of symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor and antithesis, it reveals aspects of motive and truth to the sudden comprehension of the audience which perhaps whole scenes of prose exposition would fail to do.

The world of the theatre and the pounding pulse of poetry that activates high drama was again brought home to me when I was a guest of Nancy Price at her recent recital of dramatic and lyrical poems at the Alliance Hall. This Boadicea of the theatre is the leader and driving force of the People's Theatre under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This organisation has a beautifully produced magazine, and though handicapped by lack of a theatre owing to commercial difficulties, keeps, through her recitals and play readings, its ideal alive—a theatre where all work co-operatively and where plays are chosen for their worth and not for their commercial value. How well this aim was realised in days before the war, when Nancy Price, at the Fortune, Little, and Playhouse Theatres, produced eighty-two plays! They included "The Rose Without a Thorn," by Clifford Bax, "Festival," by W. B. Yeats, and her own special discovery, "Lady Precious Stream," that Chinese gem by S. I. Hsiung.

I have recently discovered, through the National Institute for the Blind, how greatly poetic awareness is intensified when blindness throws back an individual on to the resources of the spirit. Through the medium of braille magazines and gramophone records something has been done to meet the poetic needs of the Blind. There are vast possibilities in its extension by specially designed anthologies, by the creation of a wider forum for the work of the blind poets, with its own special quality of heightened tone and imaginative colour value, for readings and for entertainment at recitals.

An informed guide to Modern Scottish Poetry has long been greatly needed by and for the English poetry lover. Joseph Macleod (in *Anvil*,

2/6) has dealt with the difficult bilingual question in his survey, and has emphasised how poetry is close to the people in Scotland where a poem is welcomed as a new joy, and how a true poet is assured of royal hospitality. It is also heartening to find a new periodical with a panoply of poems, although their range and themes are not ambitious, apart from a translation from Appolinaire.

The current edition of *Now* (2/-) contains an appreciation of D. H. Lawrence as a poet by Kenneth Rexroth. The poetic Lawrence is little known, but if poetry is vision and the pure distilment of emotional communion and contemplation, then he deserves greater recognition. Part of the book is devoted to a review by Louis Adeane of recent volumes of poems from Herbert Read to Spender, and other pages contain an array of poetry nicely balanced between modern and traditional forms.

Horizon (2/6) in a long and recondite article by Humphrey Hake, has brought Swinburne from his internment and traced the parabola of that poet of sensual suffering past his zenith in "Atalanta" to his disintegration and the spluttering out of his fires in "Bothwell." Yet how brilliant those fires, how fluent his metres and melodious his cadences in his greatest work! And how our grandmothers must have thrilled and shuddered to "Anactoria":

> "I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
> Intense device and superflux of pain;
> Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
> Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;
> Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
> Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;
> Relapse and reluctation of the breath,
> Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death."

The current *Adelphi* (2/6) of which Middleton Murry is editor, is interspersed with an array of poems that are a tribute to his discernment. Phoebe Hesketh contributes "Return."

English (2/6), the magazine of the English Association is devoted in large measure to lyrical poems, to reviews of poetry, and to a poetry competition. Sydney Tremayne contributes a long and brilliant poem, "The Living Years." A smouldering fire of faith and optimism warms his chill and inexorable pursuit of the years:

> "Let day be my delight though blank-faced clocks
> Like beggarly intellects add nought to nought
> With chill precision in the heart of noon.

Time mocks their terrible accountancy,
The seed breaks in the ground, the green tides run,
Plucking the seasons clean, rolling the wrecks
Of broken illusions to oblivion down.
Because there is nothing final I rejoice
In the shift of sky like a face that lights and clouds
With moods too deep to approach except by love."

Orion No. 4 (8s.6d.), the current issue of that ranging miscellany, edited by Denys Kilham Roberts, offers among its studies, stories, autobiographies and sterner moments, a selection of poems by ranking poets.

There are four poems by Walter de la Mare, and two by Edith Sitwell, including her well-known, luxuriantly imaginative and symbolic poem, "The Canticle of the Rose," with its clarion stanza:

"But high upon the wall
The Rose where the Wounds of Christ are red
Cries to the Light—
'See how I rise upon my stem, ineffable bright
Effluence of bright essence . . . From my little span
I cry of Christ, who is the ultimate Fire
Who will burn away the cold in the heart of Man. . . ."

FOREIGN POETS

BY

GEORGE WOODCOCK

Arthur Rimbaud by Enid Starkie (Hamish Hamilton, 15s.); *Rimbaud* by Wallace Fowlie (Dobson); *A Mirror for French Poetry* edited by Cecily Mackworth (Routledge, 10s. 6d.); *Poésie* 39-45 edited by Pierre Seghers (PL, 15s.); *Men and Saints* by Charles Peguy (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.); *Contemporary Chinese Poetry* edited by Robert Payne (Routledge, 10s. 6d.); *Singing Farmer* by L. A. S. Jermyn (Blackwell, 12s. 6d.).

It can be said with reasonable justice that most of the explosive tendencies in recent poetry have had their origin in France, and, as the books I am considering in this essay show, that radical influence, that destructive urge which is also creative, has shown its influence of late even as far as China. Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Charles Cros, Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire—all these *enfants terribles* of poetry antedate their

equivalents in other lands. Eliot and Pound, the two prime movers in changing English poetry, were both profoundly influenced by the work of the French rebels, and almost the only influential modern poet who worked without being inspired by them was Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Of all these French poets, the most destructive, and perhaps at the same time the most creative, was Arthur Rimbaud, that curious frenzied adolescent who in a few feverish years of his youth poured out a mass of verse and prose poems which completely changed the direction of modern poetry. Baudelaire, departing from the Romantics, had altered the spirit and subject-matter of poetry while adhering to the old formal regularity, and the same applies in a degree to Gerard de Nerval. Rimbaud attacked form and content alike, and out of the melting of his demoniac energy produced poetry bewilderingly and wonderfully different from what had gone before. It would be wrong to give Rimbaud all the credit for the poetic revolution of which he was the symbolic figure; at least one elder poet, Charles Cros, worked along the same lines and may have had his influence on Rimbaud, while Verlaine and Mallarmé, each in his different way, contributed to the general change in the French poetic climate that took place in this period. But of all these, the Satanic imp and the most brilliantly meteoric genius was Rimbaud.

Rimbaud is one of those enigmatic figures who attract discussion. His desperate searching for salvation in Satanism and Christianity alike, his plunging into religion and debauchery, into anarchism and alchemy, render him a puzzling writer, and one to whom the cranks among critics are attracted irresistibly. But, so far as I know, there has only been one adequate work on him in English, and that is the biographical study, *Arthur Rimbaud*, by Enid Starkie, which was first published in 1939 and has now been re-issued in an enlarged form. Miss Starkie delves very thoroughly into Rimbaud's background, and into the forces that moved him, the influences that moulded the form and content of his poetry. The result is a biographical study in the true sense of the word; Rimbaud's life story is told in an eloquent but not over-sensational manner, and is linked to a discussion of the nature and value of his poetry in such a way that the two sides of the book complement each other adequately, and form together an excellently comprehensive study of a mystifying poet. Miss Starkie largely bases her interpretation of Rimbaud's work and the essential period of his life on a study of his interest in magic. She shows in a very convincing way how strongly alchemical symbolism, and hermetic philosophy in general, mould the form and imagery of the verse, and interprets his life in that turbulent period when he produced his most vital work, while he and Verlaine plumbed the depths of dissipation, on the basis of a magical conception of regeneration through the descent into the hell of his own nature. It is a fascinatingly interesting work of scholarship on the nature of a poet's impulses, and should certainly rank among the few good works on French poetry written by an English critic.

Another, slighter work on this poet has been published recently. It is *Rimbaud,* by Wallace Fowlie, and I mention it only because it shows an imprecision and a subjugation to an *idée fixe* in which Miss Starkie's book is fortunately lacking. Mr. Fowlie bases his interpretation of Rimbaud almost wholly on a quasi-Freudian theme of revolt against the family background, and spends a great deal too much of his short space on somewhat irrelevant comparisons between Rimbaud and his other favourite authors. There are some interesting comments on the poems, but the good points of Mr. Fowlie's book are fragmentary and it completely lacks the adequacy of Miss Starkie's definitive work.

The revolutionary century of French poetry of which Rimbaud seems the incandescent pinnacle is the subject of Cecily Mackworth's anthology of translations, *A Mirror of French Poetry,* 1840-1940. Appropriately, the anthology begins with Baudelaire, and it includes versions of almost all the significant poets from Baudelaire down to Jean Malaquais. The originals are printed opposite the translations, a method which adds to the interest from the reader's point of view, but which at times only helps to show up the inadequacy of the translation.

One of the facts which emerge with most force is that a good English poet is not necessarily a good translator. An example is Arthur Symons, who was certainly one of the best English poets of the 1890's, who had a very sound knowledge of French poets and poetry, and who in his own way had assimilated very completely the influence of the French symbolists, particularly Verlaine. Yet his translations from Verlaine are strikingly inadequate. As an example, there is Verlaine's justly famous *Colloque Sentimentale,* beginning:

> Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé
> Deux formes ont tout à l'heure passé.
>
> Leurs yeux sont morts et leurs lèvres sont molles,
> Et l'on entend à peine leurs paroles.

which Symons translates:

> In the old park, solitary and vast,
> Over the frozen ground two forms once passed.
>
> Their lips were languid and their eyes were dead,
> And hardly could be heard the words they said.

For me this version has completely lost all the subtle evocativeness of the original.

In general, the translations where the poem depends for its effect on suggestion or on the mnemonic value of its words, are less successful than where the concrete image plays the better part, and, on the whole, satirical poems like those of Cros, Jarry, Apollinaire and Malaquais are most successful. Some translators fail because of being too literal and not

realising that a word in English which conveys the same literal meaning as the French may yet be completely inappropriate because of its clumsiness in the particular rhythmic context. For example, in Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* comes the very evocative phrase:

> . . . le ciel rougeoyant comme un mur
> Qui porte, confiture exquise aux bons poètes,
> Des lichens de soleil at des morves d'azur;

In the translation "confiture exquise" appears as "exquisite jam", which, while being literal, is also laughable, and destroys the whole effect of the verse.

Another translator goes to the opposite extreme of being unliteral, but also laughable. In a poem by Jules Romains occurs the line:

> L'air qu'on respire a comme un gout mental,

This is translated as:

> The air I breathe is fresh with spirit-savour,

which is inexact, since "spirit-savour" is not the same as "gout mentale," and also carries an unfortunate suggestion of alcoholism which makes it verge on the ridiculous.

Nevertheless, there are many excellent translations in this volume, and I would mention particularly David Paul's versions of Baudelaire, Roy Campbell's version of Rimbaud's "Les Chercheuses de Poux," W. J. Strachan's versions of Apollinaire and A. L. Lloyd's translations of Charles Cros and Alfred Jarry.

Poésie 39-45 is an anthology, chosen by Pierre Seghers, editor of the French review *Poésie*, of poetry of the French Resistance. In judging work of this kind, which has a certain social or philosophical tendency, one has to be cautious not to be led away by irrelevant considerations, not to allow the subject of the poems or the opinions expressed therein to interfere with one's judgment of the work as literature. In general, poetry which is written in the heat of a physical struggle or in the grip of a mass feeling tends to lose its concreteness and personality. The cause replaces the person, the abstraction replaces the image, and the work of the poet usually suffers. Thus, in the case of poets represented in this collection, however we may admire their spirit of resistance to evil, their personal heroism, we have to realise that these considerations are beside the point, and that a coward or a cad can often write better poetry than a brave man in the heat of action.

The poems of the French Resistance, whatever the personal merits of their writers, do not shine with very great brilliance after two years of peace, and we are reminded of the mass of English poets of the 1914-18 wars, whose work, once its immediate context was removed, lapsed into insignificance. Compared with the work in the book last reviewed, the poems in *Poésie* 39-45 are pedestrian, and their value seems to have faded

now that their movement is finished. They were cries of resistance, voices of a cause which has long disintegrated into the mean squabbles of political rivalry, and already their interest is that of occasional pieces. In the tradition of French poetry I doubt if many of them will count for a great deal. Exceptional are the poems of Paul Eluard, Patrice de la Tour du Pin and Pierre Emmanuel, the last of whom in particular seems to have gained greatly in personal stature from his wartime experiences. His *Lamentation pour le Tempts d'Avent,* ably translated by Francis Scarfe, is a really fine poem, and Eluard's *Dimanche Apres-midi* reveals an interesting new side of that poet. For the rest, one might quote with approval the modesty of Vercors, who said of one of his own pieces:

> "What interest is there now in this portrait of a troubled mind which could only choose, in 1940, after making sure reason was on its side? For myself, I no longer feel much affection for these pages."

Most of the poems in this anthology have interest as historical documents, but little more.

An earlier French poet who lived intensely for his day and for a whole variety of causes, but whose present relevance, at least as a poet, is doubtful, is Charles Peguy. Peguy was an admirable man, who followed his beliefs with great courage and self sacrifice, and the collection of his works, *Men and Saints,* prepared by Anne and Julian Green, is extremely interesting as a portrait of a good man who lived his poetry. But from a literary viewpoint the prose, full of social ideas which are still provocative in spite of their forty years of age, is of much more interest than the verse. Peguy was a man of causes; he was an ardent Dreyfusard and an ardent Catholic, a socialist and a French chauvinist all at once. His head was so full of ideas on these subjects that his poetry moves on a wholly abstract plane and is divorced almost completely from that world of concrete and subconscious imagery whence the true poet draws inspiration.

The second issue of *Translation,* a periodical miscellany edited by Neville Braybrooke and Elizabeth King, contains a wide and catholic collection of translators and translations from many languages, including, besides the more familiar tongues, poems in Estonian, Croatian and Hebrew.

Some of the items are re-translations of familiar poems by celebrated poets. There are competent new versions of Nerval's *Myrtho* by James Kirkup and Baudelaire's *Cats* by Wrenne Jarman, as well as three pleasantly rendered sonnets of Heredia by Allan M. Laing. If I had to choose any one poem as the best of this collection, I think I would pick on Roy and Mary Campbell's *Somnambulistic Ballad* from Lorca, one of the best translations of that poet I have yet read. A number of interesting lesser-known poets appear, like the Spaniard Rafael Montesinos and the Portuguese Alberto de Serpa, and on the whole this volume seems adequately to fulfil the promise of its predecessor in forming a valuable

means of bringing forward individual translations and introducing little-known foreign poets.

I do not profess to be able to judge Robert Payne's *Modern Chinese Poetry* as translation, but a great deal can be learnt from it, even by the mass who have no Chinese, about recent tendencies in Chinese poetry. Political changes in China have been accompanied by changes of literary outlook, and English and French poetry, as well as Communist theories of Socialist Realism, have played their part in changing it. Much of the verse in this volume is ephemeral, and the same criticisms as I made of the French resistance poetry apply here. Verse has also been included which, if we can judge from the translation, has no poetic quality at all, but is merely propaganda ranting. But many of the poets maintain the tradition of Chinese poetry with which we have become familiar through the translations of Arthur Waley and Ezra Pound, and I find a much more evocative appeal in such genuinely Chinese verse as that of Tseng K'o-Chia than in the westernised or Sovietised verse of many of his contemporaries. Here is one of his little poems which seems to me particularly pleasant:

The yoked oxen
Drive abreast,
One hand holding the plow,
The farmer follows behind.
The fresh earth surges like waves,
Exhaling its fragrance.
With a dog by his side,
The child lies on the ground.
Crows follow the plow,
Slowly flapping wings,
Sometimes alighting on the yoked oxen.

Lastly, there is another new translation of Virgil's Georgics, *The Singing Farmer,* by L. A. S. Jermyn. It is a scholarly but pedestrian work, and to my mind in no way supplants Dryden who, though he may not have been very exact, made at least a fine poem which mirrored the spirit of an age very similar to Virgil's.

PRINCIPLE AND AUTHORITY

By DEREK STANFORD

Poetry of the English-speaking World, edited by Richard Aldington (Heinemann 15s.); *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by Eleanor Ruggles (The Bodley Head 10s. 6d.); *The Classical Moment*, by Martin Turnell (Hamish Hamilton 12s. 6d.); *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, by James G. Southworth (Columbia University Press 3.00).

Let me begin this review by admitting that Mr. Aldington's new anthology strikes me as being quite invaluable and, at the same time, quite unideal: invaluable, because it offers a more compendious collection of poems written in English from 600 A.D. to the present day than any other volume (at a similar price) still obtainable from the booksellers; and unideal, for reasons to which I now attend.

Firstly, then, Mr. Aldington describes his anthology as being "general" rather than "personal" in nature; meaning, by the former, one which gives "the best of a period—which in the present case is poetry in the English language," and, by the latter, one which gives "only what appeals to [the editor's] special taste and ignores popular poems." Now while it is plainly evident that even the "general" anthologist's choice—his inclusion or exclusion of what is most well-known, popular, or perfect in its own right—is ultimately a personal one, Mr. Aldington's collection appears to be personal in another sense, in a sense which makes this reviewer feel that the editor has fallen between two stools.

If we define the editor of the ideal "general" anthology as one who makes a personal selection from what is most representatively good, and the editor of the ideal "personal" anthology as one who makes a consistent selection from what is most individually revealing, most truly representative and reflective of *him*, we see that Mr. Aldington in no way coincides with either. So it comes about that this collection results in our somehow feeling aware of the absence of any selective principle, objective or subjective, at work within its editor. In other words, this rich anthology—containing so many popular favourites and by no means lacking in "novel" lucky-dips—is finally without a shape: its wealth is of an incoherent nature.

As an example of this lack of direction, regarding the continuity of what is most representative and best in the annals of English poetry, we find—amongst the names of eighteenth century poets—no mention of either Akenside or Crabbe, though Fawkes, Grainger, Mickle, Bruce, and Curran, and many others of such stature, neither historically important as Akenside or poetically valid as Crabbe, are included.

Amongst Mr. Aldington's nineteenth century galaxy similar omissions are to be discovered; for while such unimportant or petty figures as Richard Hengist Horne, Andrew Lang, and Austin Dobson are included, we look in vain for Sydney Dobell (in many ways, with some ten haunting poems, a precursor of the symbolist technique) and that strange viking Spencer—Charles Doughty (whose significance, Mr. Hugh Macdiarmid —with unfortunate over-statement—has written, "dwarfs all other English poets since Elizabethan times"). Neither do such generally now recognised poets as Clare and Darley receive their due; both being limited to one short poem. This faulty perspective and sense of proportion is certainly in no way redressed when we come to Mr. Aldington's twentieth century harvest. Here, with the conspicuous absence of that modern American Marlowe—Hart Crane*—we find Miss Edith Sitwell also missing, though the work of both her brothers is represented. If anything, however, the inclusions in this section are of an even stranger nature. Who, we ask, is Anna Wickham, Elinor Wylie, Leonard Bacon, Wilson MacDonald; and who is Eric Robertson Dodds?

Turning to the single piece by this last poet—dealing with the theme of love in action, and the unknowable "other-ness" of the beloved—we think we begin to comprehend one, at least, of the motives, possibly unconscious, of the editor's choice. "Olympian," wrote Gerard Manley Hopkins, concerning the types of poetic speech, is "the language of strange masculine genius which suddenly, as it were, forces its way into the domain of poetry, without naturally having a right there." Now Robertson Dodd is an "Olympian" poet; and his work which—aesthetically speaking—seems wanting, has—humanly speaking—a powerful appeal. This latter quality, we suppose, exercised so strong an attraction on Mr. Aldington, the novelist, that Mr. Aldington, the poet, was temporally suspended.

In conclusion, we must admit that if the editor's method of choice fails in constructive discrimination there are many felicitious "pickings" to be found here. Amongst these must be named Victor Plarr's "Epithamium Citharistriae," Sir Thomas Wyatt's little-known "They flee from me that sometimes did me seek," and Chidiock Tichbourne's poignant swan-song written the night before his execution. In all, a book to buy and disagree about.

The question of how much authority—spiritual, formal, or intellectual —is beneficial to the poet proves a continually debatable problem. How far, for example, in Hopkins' case, was the periodic atrophy of the poet's power of creative expression "due"—as Middleton Murry suggests—"to the starvation of experience which his vocation imposed upon him," or how far was it the inevitable result of two different natures warring within him: his father's, volatile and imaginative; his mother's, reflective and analytical? Again, how far was his conversion an attempt to escape

* The anthology contains work by Scots, Irish and American poets.

from "the sordidness of things" (that "most unmixedly painful thing" and one which "is (objectively) intensified and (subjectively) destroyed by Catholicism"), or how far did it originate in the poet's desire to over-lay and escape awareness of his passionate existence? How far, too, was his keen recognition of the organic life of nature (that "sensible thing", he wrote of a waterfall, "naturally and gracefully uttering the spiritual reason of its being") and a sense of divinity conveyed by it ("I do not think," he once wrote during his novitiate, "I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at") sufficient equipment for the poet, sufficient discipline by joy, in itself, without submitting his passionate sensuous apprehension to the regimen of monasticism ("feeling love, in particular," he observed in a letter, "is the greatest moving power and spring of verse and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always make 'capital' of it")? Finally, how far was this submerged dialectic of authority and person, of principle and desire, productive of that splendid formal tension which his best poetry manifests, and without which it might have become diffusive and uncoordinated (his earlier poems do, indeed, hint at a certain undirected luxury of speech)?

None of these really basic questions Eleanor Ruggles pretends to answer; and her book on the poet must be considered neither as a psychological study nor as an assessment of his work, but rather as a straight biography or "life." Taken in this light, it merits high praise. Eleanor Ruggles is well acquainted with the temporal background to the poet's story: the Oxford of Pusey, Liddon, and Jowett; the Jesuit novitiate at Roehampton, the aspect of life at Stonyhurst College and at the Catholic University, Dublin; and the friendship of the priest with other poets: with Bridges, Dixon Watson, and Coventry Patmore is most pleasingly portrayed.

Mr. Martin Turnell is one of the ablest of Catholic critics now writing in this country, and his new book *The Classical Moment*—a re-evaluation of the work of Corneille, Racine, and Molière—is a thoughtful, provocative and scholarly work.

Whereas the seventeenth century was, for English art and thought, a period of "expansion," for France it was an age of "consolidation". This call to order first proceeded, according to Mr. Turnell, from Corneille; who was not, he maintains, a somewhat empty and bombastic upholsterer of drama (for centuries, now, the general English judgment) but a poetical specialist in moral heroism, a noble exponent of the fierce debate between the forces of passion and reason, with the latter appearing in the dress of duty. Neither was Molière, he next asserts, a humorous promoter of free-thinking (as Sainte-Beuve and other critics declared) but a brilliant defender of the reasonable, of innate and natural good sense—what Bagehot once termed "animated moderation"

—against all aspects of fanaticism, whether unreasoned or reasoned in nature. Finally, coming to the last of his trio, Mr. Turnell convincingly proves that Racine was by no means the gentle poet of tender and refined sensibility, the exemplary laureate of Versailles, but a poet in whom the concept of passion—violent, sadistic, and anti-social—triumphed over the concept of reason, until his two final works, "Esther" and "Athalie" (in which a new principle of restraint, based on the close amalgamation of Church and State precariously appears). At the present time, when the internal takes precedence of the expansionist element in our British civilization, this is a book to study and ponder.

Behind the work of Corneille and Molière, and the final dramas of Racine, we feel the pull of social authority, the attraction towards some ideal communal order. According to Mr. Southworth this is just what we miss in reading the poems of Thomas Hardy. Ultimately, they lack that tension, that tautness both of thought and form which comes from the poet's rigorous acceptance of the discipline of some ideal. This discipline Thomas Hardy could not follow because he failed to recognise any ideal, because he could envisage no absolute values, because his scepticism rejected all constants.

Now this is well and truly said; and explains to us why Thomas Hardy, a great and—somewhat rarer—a sincere Victorian, is none the less not a major poet of the stature of Wordsworth, Shakespeare or Keats. The exposition of this line of thought, however, occupies some thirty pages of well-reasoned and earnest writing. The other two hundred are earnest and dull.

The point is that Mr. Southworth is an ardent moralist, a painstaking and conscientious scholar, but very little of a literary critic. So it comes about that he fills his chapters on Hardy's treatment of "women," "love," and "fate", on his diction, his prosody, his imagery, etc., with endless quotation upon quotation, the sum and significance of which he fails to grasp. This general failure to unify results, it would seem, from a want of intuition, which the following passage illustrates. "Hardy's intense curiosity about women," writes Mr. Southworth, "leads him astray in other than portraits of great ladies. One beauty grown to womanhood where there were few to admire her is purported to have come too late to the realisation of her great beauty and that she has untimely thrown herself away on a poor plain man whose pride in her, manifesting itself as it does, makes her petulantly remark to herself:

> "O damn, don't show in your look that I'm your chattel
> Quite so emphatically."

I cannot vouch for what went on in the woman's mind to give her a disgruntled look, but I cannot believe that it was resentment at her husband's pride and attention." Here, in a text as clear as day, Mr. Southworth cannot understand that what irritates the woman is not the

homage of her husband's pride, but the possessiveness of it; in other words, his attitude of ownership.

Another annoying factor in Mr. Southworth's writing is his quite unspecific optimism. Again and again, he remarks with pity that Hardy was unfortunate in being born in an era of transition between two faiths. Had he been living and writing to-day, Hardy, like us, would have seen the light. The nature of this illumination, Mr. Southworth, however, never divulges. Along with Thomas Hardy we remain in the dark.

BOOKS ON THE TABLE

Reviewed by WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

The First Romantics, by Malcolm Elwin (Macdonald, 15s.); *For Thee The Best,* by Mark Aldanov (Cape, 8s. 6d.); *Silver Poets of the 16th Century,* Ed. by Gerald Bullett (Dent, 4s.); *Selected Poems of Tennyson,* Ed. by Sir John Squire (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.); *Bolts of Melody,* by Emily Dickinson Cape, 16s.); *Presenting Shakespeare,* by R. C. Peat (Harrap, 5s.); *Studies in Religious Poetry of the 17th Century,* by W. L. Doughty (Epworth Press, 7s. 6d.); *Bhagavad-Gita,* Introd. by Aldous Huxley (Phoenix House, 6s.); *Two Lectures on Browning,* by Dallas Kenmare (Burrow's Press, Cheltenham, 2s. 6d.); *The Inner Room,* by George Rostrevor Hamilton (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.); *What Images Return,* by Helen Spalding (Methuen, 5s.); *Miniatures,* by Lady Margaret Sackville (Beamsley House, Bradford, 2s. 6d.); *Salt Harvest,* by Carla Lanyon Lanyon (Williams & Norgate, 3s. 6d.); *And So To Bed,* compiled by E. Sackville-West (Phoenix, 12s. 6d.); *Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry,* Ed. by Howard Sergeant (Harrap, 8s. 6d.); *Switzerland,* Ed. by Arnold Lunn (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 16s.).

The hero of the Romantic Revival in Mr. Malcolm Elwin's group-biography, *The First Romantics,* is unquestionably Coleridge. He it is who receives the chief palms in this very readable but partisan book. Wordsworth and Southey emerge as time-servers and apostates, adherents of causes they all too soon desert, self-interested and disloyal. He quotes each of the three upon the others: Southey describing Wordsworth's intellect as being "always upon the stretch and strain," as gazing "at pileworts and daffydowndillies through the same telescope which he applies to the moon and the stars" (a "shrewd" diagnosis this, according to Mr. Elwin); Wordsworth criticizing Southey for writing "too much at his ease" and neglecting "those lofty imaginings, that are peculiar to,

and definitive of, the poet," and lamenting Coleridge's " constant infelicity that prevented him from being the poet that Nature had given him the power to be." But Coleridge, on the other hand, praising Wordsworth as a poet "the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose," spreading what Mr. Elwin calls "a legend about Wordsworth's genius," and interesting himself in Southey's poetry to the extent of reading whole passages aloud, and also supervising and contributing to the re-writing of the latter's "Joan of Arc"—from which his lines were afterwards omitted by Southey. There can be no doubt that Coleridge was the kindliest, the most spontaneous and greatest-hearted of the three poets; but in his passion to exalt him—more, I suggest, on account of his pacifism and his espousal of the ideal of pantisocracy than for his poetic achievement—Mr. Elwin seems to me to do far less than justice to Southey and Wordsworth. Any stick is used to beat Wordsworth: Annette Vallon and their love-child; Lamb's picture of him as "cold"; the "sensuality" Mr. Elwin finds in his portraits; and so on. When the poet speaks in "The Prelude" of "slight shocks of young love-liking" Mr. Elwin takes it upon himself to amplify this into "furtive philandering, some tumbling and tousing behind hayricks or in a barn's dark corners at a country hop," while, as for Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, he reminds us of their "invariable habit of disguising distasteful facts in fine phrases."

This is, as I say, a readable book. Mr. Elwin has a popular approach to a triple biographical theme which has not been exhausted in numerous expert volumes. Regarded thus, it may serve to stimulate the ordinary reader's interest in the personalities and principles of one of the most remarkable Movements in the history of English Poetry. These were men who worked—as we ourselves have worked more than a century later—against a background of political and social unrest and two European wars. They were fallible human beings who indulged in the chitchat of literary and personal criticism (as poets still do to-day). How they acted, what they did and said, will always be of interest for interpretation and comment; but it is the poetry they left behind them that matters, much more than any debatable *personalia.*

A later period of European unrest sets the scene for the next book, a novel. Had an English author planned one on the close of Lord Byron's career he would not, I fancy, have adopted the Russian writer Mark Aldanov's method of giving his central character not much more importance than his other characters. Castlereagh, Wellington, George IV and the Tsar Alexander I all prominently take the stage with Byron in *For Thee the Best,* against a background of courts and conspirators, routs and congresses; and the result is that the interest constantly shifts from the poet. It opens a little confusedly with the initiation of Byron into the Italian revolutionary society of the Carbonari (the charcoal burners), meeting secretly at Florian's in Venice. The time is towards the end of his

liaison with the Countess Guiccioli. His mind and senses are alike weary of her; he is bored with himself, with his posing attitudes private and public; even the beauty of Italy and her art treasures no longer give him any satisfaction. He is conspicuous everywhere he goes ("the cripple!" "the crazy poet!"); the Byronism he had splashed across the literature and fashion of Europe is a thing in which he can take no pride. New occupations and sensations must be found to help him to escape from his ennui, and one of these—which will free him from the Countess and maybe yield him a soldier's grave—is the invitation to lead an expedition against the Turks for the liberation of Greece. Failing health, cynicism, disgust and disillusion are all weighed in the balance against a Cause—which he dare not look at too closely. So the decision is taken, a ship is fitted out and, with the eyes of Europe upon him, he becomes the Grand Strategist at Missolonghi, commanding a rabble of discontented mercenaries, with undependable officers and uncertain munitions, ready to die for "freedom" in a new battle of Lepanto. The book ends with Byron's death from a malignant fever, and perhaps Mr. Aldanov's prettiest ironical touch is when, after the tragedy, one of the long-distance rockets on which the liberators had set such store is touched off—and falls harmlessly nearby. A damp squib for Byron's military adventure, maybe, but his fame as a poet has not yet fallen to ground!

I go back to an earlier time. When Mr. Gerald Bullett chose his precious-metal adjective for his *Silver Poets of the 16th Century* he was resolved to use some word other than *minor* for a body of work which, though it be not of the grandest flights of song, has a great range of excellence. Here we have the verse of Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Raleigh and Sir John Davies in a book of over 400 pages—the product of "brilliant, violent, high-minded, treacherous times." "Three of them," as Mr. Bullett reminds us, "died young, three were tried for their lives on charges of treason, and two (unoffending victims of malice) were beheaded." These Elizabethans laid a debt on succeeding generations. Wyatt and Surrey created new modes of poetical expression; the others had the advantage of the general efflorescence of lyric culture; but all of them contribute to the enduring glory of English poetry, bringing to it a freedom and fluency which are its chief characteristics.

Three centuries later that quality of singing fluency took Tennyson to undreamed-of heights of popularity. When he died at the age of eighty-three he was laid to rest in the Abbey, with Dukes and Statesmen acting as his pall-bearers. Never had there been such a celebration of a poet's fame in English history. His books had circulated by the ten-thousand, he was as much the poet-hero as Charles Dickens had been the people's novelist. But then—at first slowly but soon gaining momentum—the reaction set in, the little green volumes which had delighted our fathers and grandfathers were found in neglected stacks in secondhand bookshops and the process of denigration and derision became almost

general with critic and reader alike. So it was when Mr. Harold Nicolson stepped in with a sober appraisement of the poet's work, and now Sir John Squire offers us his *Selected Poems of Tennyson.* It is a substantial though still slender volume and of course his choice is highly personal. Tennyson was often trite, often tunefully superficial and conventional in thought and phrase, but this selection will remind those who need reminding that he was a supreme lyrist and word-artist.

Emily Dickinson was an unknown American contemporary of Tennyson. In the last twenty years the cult of her has attained great dimensions in the United States and, to a slightly lesser degree, here. She has been hailed with superlatives by many of the world's leading critics and—in her homeland at least—her posthumous fame seems likely to increase. During her lifetime (1830–1886) she published only half a dozen poems, but since her death something like 1,500 pieces have seen the light. The present volume, *Bolts of Memory,* contains over 650 poems, all brief and lyrical, and apparently they were scribbled on any old bits of paper (bills, programmes, invitations, used envelopes, scraps and handbills), pierced and tied together with bits of string and thrown into chests. Surely self-expressionism without any regard for an audience has never gone further! Some of the verses are negligible blurts—thoughts and feelings tossed off in the first words that came to her pen; but others reveal patience and care, with much crossing out and substitution. Several pages of facsimile manuscript are printed in the Introduction and prove conclusively how random and white-hot was Emily Dickinson's method of composition. It almost amounted to automatic writing. Any sight, any thought, any feeling—she was given to putting them all down with intensity. And what does the sum-total amount to?—a mass of lyric fervour in rather monotonous lyric forms from which some few emerge as poetry. Yet when the enthusiasts have done with her it will be found that a few score of her lyrics will survive as rare and lovely things.

When I was a schoolboy one of my rare delights was to see the Ben Greet Company presenting Shakespeare on a draped stage in a municipal hall. Sometimes William Poel took a hand, and then we had the apron stage as Burbage knew it. Such occasions naturally did more to quicken my interest in Shakespeare than all the class-room instruction. But I believe we are not much further advanced to-day in teaching methods, and it is to remedy matters that Mr. R. C. Peat (with obvious enthusiasm and with his experience of a city school of nearly seven hundred boys) has prepared his book, *Presenting Shakespeare.* It is intended for pupils of about fourteen years of age, with a year before them in which they can read two or three plays before going on to the detailed study of one—required in the School Certificate year. And Mr. Peat's method is first to discuss the earliest plays, then the Elizabethan playhouse and Shakespeare himself—to provide a mental picture of the times—and then to

present four of the plays, with some of the scenes omitted but with continuity preserved by quotations from Lamb's "Tales". The plays here given are "The Merchant of Venice," "Twelfth Night," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Macbeth." After these Mr. Peat quotes scenes from "The Knight of the Burning Pestle" and concludes with extracts from Quiller-Couch's "Shakespeare's Christmas," and Maurice Baring's "The Rehearsal"—both admirably calculated to convey modern views of Shakespeare, his theatre and his times. This inexpensive little book should be a valuable aid to the better presentation of Shakespeare in schools.

Despite his disclaimer that *Studies in Religious Poetry of the 17th Century* is "not a book of literary criticism, but of personal predilections," Mr. W. L. Doughty has succeeded in producing a work to interest both the religious-minded and those concerned with poetry for its own sake. Only occasionally does he comment upon forms of verse: he prefers to leave it that what has been written has been written and that the reader, in the last resort, reads what pleases him. But implicit in all Mr. Doughty's discussion of religious thought, modes and influences, is his own excellent literary taste. Running comparisons with other poets abound, but first and foremost he looks at them as men of religion and after that as men of letters. The poets surveyed are Henry Vaughan, Francis Quarles, Richard Crashaw, Sir John Davies, Henry More and Thomas Traherne. I quarrel with Mr. Doughty over Quarles; he inclines to consign his reputation to a creeping oblivion, perhaps because of the mixture of paganism in that poet's thoughts and images. And yet, surely, some of the devotional poems in "Emblems" and "Divine Fancies" are among the finest work of the century. Mr. Doughty is on surer ground when he prophesies a fuller recognition for Sir John Davies; and as to Traherne there can be no question—his star ascends, to make a trinity with Henry Vaughan and Crashaw.

Turning to the East, I have always been inclined to think that the many attempts to bring the Western world into line with Hindu thought and mysticism were about as profitable as attempting to explain the Indian rope trick. As a system of religious teaching and faith Hinduism has been no more successful in the beneficent ordering of the lives of the Indian masses than has our own less complicated (but also Eastern) Christian religion in bringing peace on earth and goodwill towards men. The version of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* or the Song of God, now made by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood and introduced by Aldous Huxley, will however be of particular interest to students literary and metaphysical. First committed to writing twenty-five centuries ago, the Gita may be regarded chiefly as the Gospel of Hinduism, as the voice of God (in the Hindu conception) speaking to Man. But it has other aspects: it is part of a Sanskrit epic poem; it is an exposition of Vedanta philosophy; and it is a vehicle of prophecy. In fact, it resembles

in its constituent elements and scope the world's other principal scriptures. They all contribute something towards what Mr. Huxley calls "the Perennial Philosophy," the highest common factor of human thought. He sees the *Bhagavad-Gita* as indicating "the only road of escape from the self-imposed necessity of self-destruction." But I think he exaggerates in calling it "the only road"—there are many roads, and the Western world has not yet tried the Christian one. But I am grateful to Mr. Huxley and to the two eminent translators for giving us the opportunity to study a great scriptural poem in a new and attractive arrangement.

Perhaps it all comes back to what Mr. Hugh l'Anson Fausset calls "the art and understanding of life," to the furthering of a human society "in which means are always subject to an enlightened end"—the dream of all true reformers and poets with a proper understanding of their high responsibility. Robert Browning was such a spiritual fighter and many readers will be glad to have Miss Dallas Kenmare's brochure containing the *Two Lectures on Browning*, one of which was given to The Poetry Society. Miss Kenmare's paper on the Inner Drama of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett makes fascinating reading.

Mr. George Rostrevor Hamilton seems to me to achieve a notable combination of inspiration and form in his new volume, *The Inner Room*. In his work there is never anything put down hurriedly or on first thought. Lucid, cool and deliberate, he applies his considerable poetic technique and massive theory to make the fullest and most enduring use of the ideas and images that reach him. Unlike Emily Dickinson or that very dissimilar poet Louis MacNeice he does not, I imagine, ever think in verse with startling rapidity. He chooses his forms and builds slowly and surely with a patient and rewarding craftsmanship. Yet he *sings*—that is the essence of his contract with the muses. And if he employs measures sanctioned by the centuries—odes and elegies, brief lyrics, quatrains and narrative stanzas—he does so with an impeccable sureness which many more spontaneous fire-slingers would do well to ponder.

The author of *What Images Return*, Miss Helen Spalding, is a very different kind of poet. Her verse is decidedly contemporary. She gives a clue to her approach in her title-quotation from Mr. Eliot's "Marina," and a lovely indicative title it is, for her mind seems to be full of fresh images. I am grateful for her controlled femininity in the poem "Curtain":

> "Is it so easy, then? Goodbye no more than this
> Quiet disaster? And is there cause for sorrow
> That in the small white murder of one kiss
> Are born two ghosts, two Hamlets, two soliloquies,
> Two worlds apart, to-morrow?"

Two other women poets appear with brochures of a teasing thinness. Lady Margaret Sackville's *Miniatures* contains forty-one quatrains, each

separately titled and each revealing the verse accomplishment we have long admired. I quote one of them, "Sisyphus":

"Art thou not of all mortals, Sisyphus,
The perfect symbol? Each of us has known
The unachieved Ascent confronting us,
The long frustration of the Rolling Stone."

Miss Carla Lanyon Lanyon's *Salt Harvest* is a brief "imagined autobiography" of an Englishman in the West country, very near to nature's heart. It tells, in moving yet restrained verse, of his passion for the earth, for women and for the friend he left behind on the Dunkirk beach, "reticent to the last, with a great wound in his side":

"But he should have grown old, because the blossoming
Of his neat pruned pippins in the Spring
Would have gladdened this good and kindly man,
Slow moving and slow speaking,
The gentle eyed, the veteran."

I have seldom been so moved to admiration by a modern narrative poem as I have been by *Salt Harvest.*

I come now to the Anthologies, those excursions in book-making which recently received a critic's curse on the Wireless. But there can be something very satisfying about a good anthology, and the first to be mentioned (and having its origin in the B.B.C.) is *And So To Bed,* compiled from his war-time radio feature by Mr. Edward Sackville-West. My readers will remember those five-minute spells of literature which came at the end of so many anxious days. And here some of them are, loosely but discriminatingly arranged according to the Seasons; ancients and moderns gathered together in a most cultured compound, with nothing to tickle the low taste of the groundlings, but all high thinking and seemly expression. I find it a very delightful bed book.

There is nothing somniferous or sedative about Mr. Howard Sergeant's *Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry* (which is to say Northern English) It vibrates with that energy we associate with the North, and it is chosen to remind us what the region stands for in imagination and expression. Here are examples of the work of Redwood Anderson, Gordon Bottomley, Wilfrid Gibson, Norman Nicholson, Herbert Palmer, Kathleen Raine, Herbert Read, R. C. Trevelyan and Howard Sergeant himself—not to mention a host of others, including that fine lyric poet, Arnold Vincent Bowen, who died so untimely last November. Bowen was one of the most authentic of latter-day minstrels, and among much splendid work in Mr. Sergeant's anthology is this lovely lyric by the friend we mourn:

"My love rose up to the sound of bugles,
Milk-white he rose in the wounded morn,
And stiff stone dead lay he at moonset,
Under the ghost-beleagued thorn.

Sealed are the fountains of milk in my bosom,
Icy my womb, now he is gone.
Oh, never shall I hear the sound of a bugle
But the blood will freeze in my heart's cold stone."

A welcome collection has been made by Mr. Arnold Lunn in his *Switzerland in English Prose and Poetry*. The Alpine grandeurs, judging by the paucity of poems in the book, have appealed more as subjects for prose, maybe because the poets have been scared of achieving a kind of picture-postcard effect; but Byron is here with an extract from "The Prisoner of Chillon" and some few lines of Shelley are given, with a German comment on Rousseau, equally applicable to the poet, "he neither knew nor loved the Alps." Matthew Arnold's two Obermann poems, a couple of verses from Tennyson, and Thomas Hardy's sonnet on the Schreckhorn are among the few poems by great names. But the book is illustrated with some fine photographs, and after the reader has read Ruskin, Whymper, Gibbon, Belloc and the brothers Lunn, he will sigh for the lifting of the travel ban.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF NARRATIVE POEMS

Reviewed by ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH

A Tale Told (Allen & Unwin, 3s.). Edited by W. G. Bebbington.

This volume is representative and the many inclusions from the work of contemporary poets goes far to prove that the art of story-writing applied to modern circumstances loses little of its ancient magic. Though it necessarily sacrifices something of the infectious quality of the old lilts it gains something new in contemplative sincerity. For those who are interested in poetry from the writing and the interpretative standpoints this volume is valuable as an indication of a re-awakening, and maybe a new era. Recently there has been, perhaps, an excessive concentration upon introspective lyric poetry, and the moment is opportune to re-consider our great tradition of story-writing and story-telling and enrich it with a modern contribution. In a rhythmic universe there must be the

natural music and idiom in which to express every phase of human experience. Good narrative poetry with its blend of lyric and drama has almost limitless power in the realm of human psychology. It calls for great co-operation between poet and speaker to the greater virility of both.

Every child thrills to a story and invariably asks "Is it a true story?" The thrill persists in the adult as proved by the popularity of the novel and the "true story" of the biography. How much greater might be the thrill of the story told in poetry with the subtle suggestion of its rhythmic moods.

The phenomenal success of Ruth Draper owes much to her ability to live a story and to tell one in a way that holds the listener in suspense. Her audiences return time after time to hear the same story just as children beg for the old favourites.

Such audiences are, I am sure, waiting for the writers, the anthologists and the speakers to give the modern expression of the story in poem form, and "A Tale Told" is a welcome harbinger.

"The Rider at the Gate" is an example of the ability of the Laureate to hold the reader or listener "on tenterhooks" with the magic of his words and the tensity of the drama. Mr. Masefield is among those who are enthusiastic to revive the traditional British art of Story-telling in order to enrich lyric and dramatic appreciation and develop the sense of communication in speech and writing.

In this new Anthology one laments the exclusion of many favourites, but the explanation in the Preface and the slenderness of the volume disarm criticism on that score. Among contemporary inclusions I would like to express personal appreciation of "The Journey of the Magi" (T. S. Eliot), "Watching Post" (C. Day Lewis), "Battery Moving Up" (Robert Nichols), and "September Evening" (William Plomer). There are also examples in the best tradition of English humour including "James Honeyman" (W. H. Auden) and some of the "Cautionary Tales" (Hilaire Belloc). The Collection is a stimulating one and may it be a spur to writers and speakers.

A NEW RHYMING DICTIONARY

Mr. Langford Reed, a Vice-President of the Poetry Society, and known to thousands as a master of the Limerick, has earned the thanks of rhymesters and versifiers everywhere for *The Complete Rhyming Dictionary* (London: Herbert Joseph, 10s. 6d.). Apparently Mr. Reed undertook its compilation for the best of all possible reasons, because he needed it himself; but he has certainly done the job thoroughly. Less elaborately, perhaps, than the Walker's Rhyming Dictionary of our youth, but with a simplification and an easier method of reference. No one can write a poem from a dictionary, but many "stumped" sonneteers will find this extremely helpful when the chimes run out in the memory. W. K. S.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY—CXXI

By ALICE HUNT BARTLETT

Variations on a Theme, by Dorothy Quick
Published by The Fine Editions Press

Dorothy Quick is a much read poet and has inaugurated a new system of sending out from time to time on an artistically designed postcard a poem to a wide circle. There is a record of happiness in her work and occasionally a deeper note is struck as in the following:

Wherein We Kneel

Always men make a godhead for their need,
Give it a name to symbolize their faith,
Creating for their worship their own creed,
Whether it be an idol or a wraith.
Through centuries the pattern is the same—
Out of the mist of time an image comes
Lord of the Lightning, Keeper of the Flame,
Invoked by sacrifice or jungle drums.

These are the gods whom chaos could not slay;
Primordial, barbaric and supreme;
Yet they have been forgotten, passed away
Into the dim penumbra of a dream.
Still there will be that silent, secret place
Wherein we kneel, wherein we ask for grace.

And again we find an unusual acceptance in—

Clarification

The ghost world is the true world
For only there exists
The wisdom of the future
Which mortal mind resists.

The ghost world is the true world
For only ghosts can know
The amplitude of vision
Eternities bestow.

Many leading poets have spoken in admiration of Dorothy Quick's poetry.

Delirium and Drums, by Walter Blackstock, Jr.
Published by The Wings Press

Mr. Blackstock is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, and is at present an instructor of English at the Georgia School of Technology in that city. We congratulate his school after reading the following—

A Syllable of Hope

A word can be as mellow as the sun
Poured over ripe October pumpkins—bright
As sweetgum, reddened after frost has spun
Its spider-lace. A word can master height
As mountains lift their peaks to clouds and brush
The sky with snow; sometimes a word can sing
Like water over stone——and like a thrush
In April dusk, delirious with spring.

Poems Out of A Hat, by Walter Leuba
Published by The MacMillian Company

Is not the mission of the reviewer to persuade the reader to buy the book? Amy Lowell once said that a book of poems must first of all be interesting. *Poems Out of A Hat* meets her requirement handsomely. Here is a poet who writes with mockery, with bitterness, with flippancy, with compassion, and with reverence. In short, Walter Leuba, has assembled all the incongruous ingredients of modern man in his poems. As an expression of mockery we read—

Walking

The air is full of political lies
and also full of fireflies
this autumn night, and as I brood
I'm moved to healthful gratitude:
for bugs I thank a godless nature,
for lies, a godly legislature.

Poems for Music 1917-1947 by Robert Hillyer.
Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

It is something of a surprise that so distinguished a poet as Mr. Hillyer, winner of the 1938 Pulitzer Prize of Poetry with his "Collected Verse," has published but one other book of verse "Pattern Of A Day"—1940. The Poet has selected in his new book some seventy of his purely lyric poems which he wanted to keep.

Here is a man from an old Connecticut family dating back to 1635. Mr. Hillyer was educated at Kent, Connecticut, Harvard College (A.B. cum laude, 1917), and the University of Copenhagen.

Are you not relieved when you can learn from the strange text of some modern poets what they are talking about? Here is a delightful collection with no riddles.

Serenade

You can not hear me, for my lute
Is old, the silver strings
Are almost mute while rings the blare
Of horn and clarion.
But song so noisily begun
Ends with the players' breath;
When they are done and death untunes
The final tone they dinned,
The lute still whispers in the wind.

Rendezvous

If the deep night is haunted, it is I
Who am the ghost; not the tall trees
Nor the white moonlight slanting down like rain,
Filling the hollows with bright pools of silver.

A long train whistle serpentines around the hill
Now shrill, now far away.
Tell me, from what dark smoky terminal
What train sets out for yesterday?

Or, since our spirits take off and resume
Their flesh as travellers their cloaks, O tell me where,
In what age and what country you will come,
That I may meet you there.

It will be remembered that Robert Hillyer tied with Miss Sackville-West the first prize of my first Poetry Contest through The Poetry Review.

THE EXAMPLE OF T. S. ELIOT

By DEREK STANFORD

I.

Whether or not Mr. T. S. Eliot prove the minor poet he has modestly termed himself is by no means a question to be tackled lightly. One characteristic of such major poets as Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, and Shelley, namely, their prolific output is certainly something we miss in him; and D. S. Savage has remarked that "a vigorous and vehement personal creativeness has never been one of Eliot's notable qualities." This, of course, is no definitive test, and somewhat tends to substitute a criterion of quantity for one of quality. Many second-rate writers, indeed, have possessed a rare fertility, and we only have to think of Mrs. Hemans or Ella Wheeler Wilcox to understand that though the highest artistic genius is generally accompanied by rich productiveness the proof in reverse cannot be assumed true.

Be this as it may, Mr. Eliot's verse appears as singularly deficient in the property of spontaneity as it is strong in that element which D. G. Rossetti called "fundamental brain-work"; and if the former quality is one we associate with the major poet, the latter is hardly to be considered as the minor poet's designating trait. Now just on account of this very enigma—which resides, perhaps, in the fact that Eliot, whether or not born a poet, was in no wise ready to remain content with his purely natal disposition, but determined, in addition, to *make* himself one; to further inheritance by acquisition—his importance as an influence and model exists. Genius or not, Eliot has attempted to exercise all his resources; to employ every strategy of intelligence to heighten the effects of imagination. By this I do not wish to imply that his is the art of the virtuoso, concerned with a verbal legerdemain. Indeed, the craft of the poetic trickster, even of such an inspired trickster and dynamic showman as Mr. George Barker, is something quite foreign to Eliot's own art. The connotation of strategy here is one of forethought rather than deceit, of preparation and calculation rather than of deception or artifice. In this, then, resides the importance of Eliot for his own contemporaries and all who follow after.

Genius, in its highest form, appears as something denying analysis, something we cannot wholly understand, something largely incalculable. This being so, the cultivation of an art, its continuity and further development, must always reckon without counting on it, and build on the element of talent instead. Now this is what Eliot, himself equipped with so much more inventiveness and power than the minor poet generally possesses, appears in his own verse-writing to have done. Genius, one

may say, is known by its effects, and is to be studied by means of them alone. Its *rationale* somehow escapes us; we cannot focus and localise its process. In contrast, this is just what Eliot's work permits. His intentions and methods stand open to us; accessible to elucidation through a reading of his own critical writing and other pronouncements by him on poetry to be found in recent commentaries* on his work. Thus it comes about that the poems of Eliot (examples of that "interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose" which Coleridge took to be the essence of art) provide us with so many working models, so many aspects of poetic education to be studied in theory and practice alike.

The course which this essay subsequently takes will consist in an examination of Eliot's development and achievement and of their significance for the younger poets.

II.

By 1914 British poetry had reached a remarkable low-water mark. The Georgian movement dominated the scene, masquerading as a poetry of nature what was in effect a poetry of artifice; an art of the out-worn pastoral. With its approach to the countryside of the pseudo-bucolic week-ender, with its imagery as trite and obvious as the stock details of a Christmas-card (a cottage with roses round the door, the holly and the ivy, a robin in the snow), and with its melodious monotony of music, whose uniform regularity, "had thickened" as Eliot observed, "the modern ear," its programme appeared devoid of promise.

The regeneration of English verse, which Eliot undertook at this juncture, demanded three significant changes: a change of subject-matter, a change of attitude, and finally a change of style.

In the field of the first the poet attempted an enlargement of the area of material, an employment of data which had been neglected or thought unsuitable in the past. Taking the experience of urban existence, its sights and sounds and the states of mind which life in such an environment breeds, he became a kind of cartographer of the metropolitan landscape and sensibility. With this "poetisation of the unpoetical"—as Alec Brown once termed his plan—there went a concomitant change of style; of music, form, and metaphor.

This new style, which Eliot—along with his colleague Ezra Pound—did so much to introduce, has since become known as the neo-classical. Briefly, we can say that the essence of this was the application of classical canons—standards of precision, detachment, and restraint—to the problems and subject-matter of the present. But this application, in its turn, necessitated an adaptation of the classical devices of the past; for what the

* "T. S. Eliot" edited by B. Rajan (Dennis Dobson) 1947; "Four Quartets Rehearsed" by Raymond Preston (Sheed & Ward) 1946; "The Achievement of T. S. Eliot" by F. O. Matthiessen (Humphrey Milord) 1935.

poet saw to be required was not the unequivocal imposition of some ready-made traditional style upon the writer's contemporary data, but rather a presentation of this latter in terms of those constant classical virtues: precision, detachment, and control.

Beginning with Eliot's early poetry we may note how Edwin Muir once objected that it offered, not an attitude to life, but a pose. "In it", he wrote, "an anguished vision of the world is expressed in light verse". Now this was true as far as it went, but its *raison d'etre* and future implications seem to have escaped the critic. Added, then, to a temperamental aloofness (a disposition of "self-protective pride, reserve, and sensibility" which Desmond MacCarthy commented on in 1921) there went an intellectual property in the poet making for a cold undemonstrative art.

At that moment, Eliot's corrective proved a highly remedial one. Both in England and abroad, hysterical peddlers of their own emotions, salesmen and showmen of private feelings were passing themselves off on the public as poets. For these hawkers of raw personality Eliot entertained no respect. Poetry, for him, was something quite different to this confidential self-advertisement, this hasty indecent exposure in print. Art resided in the manners, not the man; and more in the medium than in either. This light verse, then, on which Muir commented, was merely the first stage in an attempt to get life into focus by withdrawing art from it and setting down the latter at one remove. Indeed, this first step of the poet is truly the first step in all the arts; for life and art are not the same, and he who tries to directly transcribe the attributes of the former is like a man taking photographs with object and camera dead-on. So irony came to give Eliot his stand, the needed distance from his subject-matter; and in such poems as "The Hippopotamus" and "Whispers of Immortality", we see his light verse, exact and exquisite as the quatrains of Gautier, as a really stringent and rigorous art, a light-weight classicism deftly disguised.

Along with these more regular measures Eliot had also employed free-verse. For many young poets in the Great War years, and in the somewhat hay-wire 'twenties, free-verse was a popular liberation, but such a one as Goethe had in mind when he remarked that "everything which frees our spirit without giving us control of ourselves is ruinous". For Eliot, however, who observed that "no *vers* is *libre* for the man who wants to do a good job", this form of composition held quite other connotations. What, in fact, he was searching for was a keener kind of auditory discipline, a more subtle *ascesis* for the ear. The very life of verse, he wrote, resides in "the contrast between fixity and flux", so providing a "constant evasion and recognition of regularity". "Liberation from rhyme", then, "might as well be a liberation of rhyme"; and one of the first and finest results of this endeavour to discover a kind of stable disequilibrium is to be seen in his poem "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", of which Edith Sitwell has written: "I have known an unskilled listener . . . to be misled on hearing this poem . . . misled by the *balance,* in spite of the constant change from

the sober walking movement of some of the lines, into the running movement of other lines, now short, now long—into believing that these are not only sharply and closely rhymed *externally*, but, from time to time, *internally* also. This is the result of the extreme control in which the poem is held." Far, then, from the amorphous anarchy of word-music, into which so much free-verse is prone to fall, Eliot's work in this region produced quite opposite effects. Some of the wide variety of uses to which the poet succeeded in putting his non-metronomic sense of rhythm are indicated by Edith Sitwell. Thus, of "The Hollow Men" she observes how certain reiterated slacknesses of movement "convey the failure of active life", how the opening passage of "What the Thunder said" suggests "the reverberation of great primitive realities", and how in the "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" "occasional rhymes, placed purposely at certain points in the poem, seem to gather together, within the region of one space and time, all these old memories of things seen and experienced, things which would otherwise lie scattered throughout space and time".

Free-verse, it would seem, largely answered the same need which impressionism answered in the field of painting. Both were techniques which aimed at conveying a greater degree of naturalness, a stronger feeling of immediacy, a sense of being—as it were—on the spot. In both, however, there inhered certain dangers, certain æsthetic weaknesses, the chief of which we may describe as the Fallacy of Identification. This consists in the attempt to communicate the very same impressions as life without considering that the media of art and existence are in no wise the same. To localise the problem to the sphere of poetry, the danger of impressionism here was that it led to a close imitation of the actual flux of living, to an art that tried, above all, to convey the streams of consciousness and time. Now both of these conditions it succeeded in presenting, with a consequent gain in vividness. Yet this same vividness, in its turn, was somehow not of a durable nature: phantasmagoric, kaleidescopic, it wanted memorability—a property arising in a work of art from the static stress of formal elements.

Just, then, as Cézanne had felt that "art should give to nature the thrill of continuance", and thus desired to make of impressionism something classical, firm and lasting, so Eliot—it would seem—when he came to write "The Waste Land" effected a brilliant synthesis of his classical and impressionistic traits, his regular and his free-verse styles. Now Cézanne was the father of cubist painting, and one of the characteristics of cubist art—especially in its later stages—is the technique by which it presents several aspects of its subject simultaneously. (Picasso's depiction of the human head, where full-face and profile are strangely conjoined, will serve as an example of this.) To stretch this analogy a little further, we may say that "The Waste Land" reveals a similar sort of poly-morphic unity. We may—to indicate but a few of the ways in which this epic acrostic can be read—interpret it primarily, with C. Day Lewis, as a

monument of the post-war "psychological slump", with Edmund Wilson, as a set of variations on "the theme of emotional starvation", with I. A. Richards, as "a music of ideas", with Alec Brown, as an argument between the lyrical and the rational, the subconsciously fertile and consciously sterile elements of the human psyche, or, more comprehensively than any of these single commentators, with F. O. Matthiessen and Cleanth Brooks,* as a kind of pantechnicon capsule epic, in which—substituting an emotive for a logical sequence—historical myths of fertility and salvation are combined and retold with modern parallels.

From "The Waste Land" onwards Eliot's poetry has developed its symphonic attributes; and "Ash Wednesday" and the "Four Quartets", with their deft manipulation of themes—their statements, departures, returns and re-statements—probably provide us with the nearest approach which language-forms have ever made to the structure of musical composition.†.

III.

My friend John Bayliss has many times maintained that the poet should speak 'with authority'; by which he means, with certitude and sureness, with firmness of thought and utterance. Naming Yeats as an example of this authoritative way of writing, I have heard him compare the Irishman with Eliot much to the latter's disadvantage; and, indeed, any contrast between these two poets reveals a great discrepancy of attitude and style.

"A great man in his price
Confronting murderous men
Casts derision upon
Supersession of breath;
He knows death to the bone—
Man has created death."

So speaks Yeats, his stoical trumpet lifted magnificently to his lips; while Eliot, with his penny-whistle, affirms that

"This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper."

To prefer the full yet laconic heroism of the first passage may be a perfectly natural choice, but to let its unreflective rhetoric deafen one to the virtues of a quite different communication is to indulge an exclusive private taste. Yeats, no doubt, spoke 'with authority' concerning those

* "The Waste Land—An analysis" ("T. S. Eliot"—Dennis Dobson).

† For an examination of this affinity see Helen Gardner's essay "Four Quartets: A Commentary" and E. E. Duncan Jones' "Ash Wednesday" in "T. S. Eliot" (Dennis Dobson).

mental regions of affirmation or simple rejection; and his poems, for the most part ("Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium" I except, as inviting more subtle interpretation), address the reader with the down-right eloquence of denial or assent. Now Eliot speaks 'with authority', too, concerning the region of negation, of uncertainty and indecision, of a world of passive suffering and difficult belief. Here, of course, the key-word, 'authority', will carry a different connotation; since one cannot convey states of anxiety and doubt with the rotund certitude of Yeat's verse. None the less, the poet may still speak with certitude of the region of negation; with certitude, because he knows it, because he speaks from the midst of it; and with firmness and sureness, because—though a victim —he is also, at the same time, an artist, and can therefore objectify his own experience. The final paradox of this position is that the 'authority' with which he speaks here must convey an impression of irresolution yet satisfy the formal requirements of art; must communicate, in other words, a sense of human indecision in an æsthetically decisive manner. Speaking 'with authority', in this context, therefore signifies speaking with certain knowledge concerning states of uncertainty; and one of Eliot's greatest achievements is the technique elaborated by him for this purpose. This we may perhaps describe as an eloquence of under-statement: a use of the stutter and anacoluthon, of irony and the vernacular; in short, a kind of expropriation of the language natural to fear and doubt.

In so far, then as we live in a world whose prevailing spiritual climate is one of negation, and in so far as we are concerned with the appreciation and creation of a poetry appropriate to it, the earlier verse of Eliot (and his later, too, in a less direct fashion) may well appear to have more meaning, more points of reference for us, than that of Yeats.

Now if this imitation of the speech of indecision—its parenthesis, meanderings, and circumlocution—tended towards a naturalistic art, in which the unrounded raggedness of life was more in evidence than elements of form, Eliot was careful to counteract this flux by a method which stressed the fixed and traditional; in short, by a method of judicious quotation. Apart from the creative act which the subtle and erudite selection of these phrases can be said to constitute, they serve in addition a higher purpose; acting as break-waters, so to speak, against the inroads of fleeting impressions, as a net-work of verbal buoys and bells serving to chart and indicate the currents of pure relativity which we feel, as in life, washing round us in these lines. By this device of counter-pointing the transient and the durable, by this well-planned system of bastions, the poet succeeds in creating an art where fashion and history, change and permanence, time and the timeless are held together in a kind of muted but tense dialectic. Eliot, we may say, has invented a means of utilising the best of both worlds; of effecting a synthesis of past and present more lively and significant than that of Ezra Pound to be found in the lumber-room of his "Cantos".

Two further features in Eliot's work making for firmness and strength of form are his use of allegory and the image. Now that which every poet needs, whose work is concerned with the presentation of any of the larger issues of life, is a system of values, a structure of ideas. This system or structure, however, is seldom suitable for the poet until its moral or intellectual concepts have received a figurative transformation, until they are capable of being apprehended in a sensuous rather than cerebral fashion. To restate the matter, what the poet requires is a body or vocabulary of images which are, at the same time, symbols; a system of personification, incarnate rather than abstract in nature. This symbolism the poet may obtain from mythology, history, astrology, or religion. Now Eliot has used both myth and religion as a source of his interpretative constants; and if certain readers have been discouraged from perusing "Ash Wednesday" and "The Four Quartets", on account of their definite Christian ground-plan, it is probably true that the interest of these readers in the early verse of Eliot was not æsthetic but social or psychological in nature. This "willing suspension of disbelief", which the reader brings to a perusal of the poems, is probably not possible in the same degree for the poet in the act of composition. In order to exploit the poetic resources of a religion or myth to the utmost the poet should preferably have faith and believe, as Eliot had when he wrote the "Four Quartets". One may object that this does not hold good for the composition of "The Waste Land", but any short study of "The Golden Bough" or Miss Weston's work "From Ritual to Romance" will show how Adonis—god of fertility —and Christ—a figure of salvation—are capable of being closely identified, as the myth of the Grail clearly demonstrates.

Now what the symbolistic method is to the poem as a whole the clear visual image is to each part: a factor making for organic concreteness. Once again, Eliot's practice and theory have helped to make this powerfully apparent. That which communicates a sense of the authentic is not a bare statement of the poet's emotion, but a visual and musical equivalent for this, in other words, an objectification. How much more telling, for example, is Prufrock's confession that he has "measured out (his) life in coffee-spoons" than if he had openly remarked on the withering tedium of his existence!

In conclusion, although we may agree that Eliot, in his critical writing, has tended—as Edwin Muir pointed out—"to underestimate the free character of tradition, the fact that in its living perpetuation it gives the artist his proper liberty", in the field of verse his fine assimilation of the historic and the contemporary, of traditional and 'revolutionary' techniques, has set before us a high example of a tempered and functional classicism.

ARNOLD VINCENT BOWEN

By HERBERT CORBY

When Arnold Vincent Bowen died on November 29th, 1947, it was as though another lamp had been turned out in a darkening world. He loved poetry. He was a happy man.

Essentially a friendly poet, his love of living made his personality warm and rich and vivid, and his excitement at the magic and delight of poetry made his conversation glitter and glint with bright enthusiasms and brilliant epithets. His love of poetry was not the academic or formal pleasure of the craftsman who appreciates the successful craftsmanship of another. It was much more than that. It was the elevated pleasure of a man who could see the best, and see it with an almost miraculous clarity: but knowing (as all poets must do) that it is not his to attain, must seek some shadow of the ghost of it in the poetry of others. His eagerness made his perceptions keener, his senses more receptive. He had, to use a phrase he loved, "nerves of delight".

Those of us who had the good fortune to know him will long remember those exuberant evenings of discussion and excitement spent in café or pub: and remember, too, the journey home from such an evening, in the colder hours of the day, when he would recite poetry in that fine voice of his, making the words thrill down the memory like the sound of bugles.

He was a fluent and exciting letter-writer: and his letters, like his poems, were part of him. It was often as though he were writing a poem, so full were they of high expression and belief. He seemed able to recall at will the felicitous phrase: as when he wrote to a young poet: "Go down to the river, and *loaf and invite your soul!*"

He could write, too, about the "expense of spirit" after one of his Viking visits to London from his Liverpool home. On these occasions he would come down upon us like the northern wind, and carry us with him wherever he wished to go. There were epic meetings, for he had that rare and enviable gift of keeping his friends, and unforgettable departures: and he would return again to those northern hills he loved to wander, leaving us aware that there was a certain emptiness about us.

But perhaps the greatest merit of his letters to other poets was his critical appreciation—that unerring ability to feel the flawed expression in a poem, or to be elated by the phrase that was "an impulse of delight"; and that faculty of being able to evoke something of the magic of our yesterdays. Writing to a fellow poet, he asks: "What about the beautiful and fantastic world of childhood? Why not draw on your sympathetic memory there? Go down to the source, when heaven lay about you. I feel one can be truly oneself without leaving, or too much surpassing, the bounds of childish appreciation. Only thus, in my opinion, can one's

poetry be the creation of your soul and not the invention of the intellect alone."

And again: "Robert Frost said that a poem 'begins in delight and ends in wisdom'. How true that is! If only some of these clever modernists with their too-chromatic, too-selfconscious verse would return to the abysmal simplicities of childhood, how much more profound and moving would their utterance be . . . Wasn't it Samuel Butler who said: 'We know best what we are least conscious of knowing'."

This aversion to some of the worst tendencies of modern verse is repeated in his letters. "So many poets concern themselves with their thoughts instead of their emotions. Yet one only gives life to what one feels, not what one thinks one ought to feel. This is why I believe so little modern poetry is realised."

Yet he did not dismiss any poet's work without a sympathetic effort to discover what virtue could be revealed in it. "Before one can dare to say anything at all about a poem" he writes, "one must recreate it as an experience and live with it. A real poem is timeless, eternal, and not to be dismissed with a clever phrase, a glib label."

He was true to his own creed. For him a poem was an adventure and part of another poet's life, and he would never value it too lightly, but gave it that part of his thought and feeling which it deserved.

Arnold Vincent Bowen's book of poems: *Lyrics of Love and Death*, is perhaps something less than a fair indication of his considerable skill and achievement as a poet, though in it we find the lovely "Night-Piece" with its stanza that Herbert Palmer has so rightly singled out for praise:—

> "Beneath the black barbaric boughs
> She, bosom bare,
> Throws down her care;
> He thrills and quivers like a mouse;
> Bound throbbing in her brigand hair,"

And to commemorate the years he spent in India, where he was born, there are the fierce poems "Sunflower" and "Indian Nightfall".

And, too, there is the haunting "Song of Love and Death":—

> "I bent a bough for beauty's sake;
> I shook the blossoms down;
> I cried, 'Dear Love, arise, awake,
> And weave your bridal crown!'
>
> Why does she neither hear, nor move,
> Beneath the petall'd rain?
> Because the grass grows high above;
> And I go mad again."

Many of his poems have appeared in anthologies and periodicals, and readers of the *Poetry Review* will recall his "Lament" which is quoted in a Book Review on p. 66 of this journal.

And who will forget the breakaway joy and jollity of that gay gesture "Twenty Soviet Sailors"?

Twenty Soviet sailors
Dance with one single will.
The dance must cease and they disperse,
but here, forever, in my verse
Behold them dancing still.

His work has been repeatedly admired by many considerable poets and critics, and Herbert Palmer, in his book, *A Sword in the Desert*, places him among the best poets of the 1939-1945 war.

His gift was the pure lyrical gift of the uplifted heart. He was, among poets, a green singing bird of the summer, an exultant linnet, a cloud-high lark. Emotion came to him and he sang without restraint, endeavouring to capture the reason for his emotion in fortunate and memorable words, to translate his own heart's ecstasy into an enduring pleasure that others could share. Because by its very nature the individual lyric can only cause a tiny ripple on the immense ocean of poetry, his work has achieved less notice and acclaim than it merits. But the ripple that the lyric makes lasts over the years, and some of his poems will undoubtedly live after the clatter of more pompous poems has died away.

His belief was

"Beauty shall triumph over all
This tyranny of time and dust".

It permeated his whole life.

He was aware, as all poets are, of the closeness of death. In the dedicatory poem to Lyrics of Love and Death he writes:—

Sharpen my arrows, Muse,
The bow burns in my hand.
I have no time to lose;
The light dies down the land.

And in the last poem he wrote there is something of a repetition of this theme.

LORD GIVE ME TIME

Lord, give me time to press
A full heart's plenteousness
Within the narrow space
Of my life's little race.

And let me offer up
A full-brimmed lily-cup

Of beauty, so long stored,
It is too much to hoard.

And when the joy-bereft
Have feasted on such riches,
May all the fragments left
Be strewn along the ditches,

Till all the world in bloom
Proclaim such prodigal grace,
Evil shall find no room,
And cover up his face.

We should always remember that none of us has time enough.

SHAKESPEARIAN EMENDATIONS—No. 7

This being the seventh paper of the series and there being many more to follow, I am beginning to wonder whether the incompetent compositors of the First Folio, instead of being blamed for their bad work, should be commended for having introduced a most interesting hobby; one that has already lasted three hundred years and looks like providing matter for discussion for as long again, viz., what emendations are necessary for the restoration of the text? A former editor of *The Scotsman* relates in his "Retrospect" that Mr. Gladstone, when asked if he knew the editor of another paper, replied that he knew him principally as a Shakespearian critic, and that one of his essays on the subject was excellent, but that he was "afraid he has a little lost himself in politics." One is inclined to comment thereon that a similar remark would apply to Gladstone himself, as he was a famous scholar, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say he *found* himself in politics! Let us conclude that he studied Hansard for business and the First Folio for pleasure, and that he was grateful to the editor for having restored a perplexing line in the Folio to its original strength and beauty.

As You Like It. IV.3.72. Starts the following passage, as recorded in the Folio, the curtailed names being, in full, Rosalind, Oliver and Celia. Rosalind's opening remark is addressed to Silvius.

> Ros. if you bee a true lover hence, and not a word; for
> here comes more company. (Exit. Sil.
>
> Enter Oliver.
>
> Oliv. Good morrow, *faire ones*: pray you, (if you know)

Where in the Purlews of this Forrest, stands
A sheep-coat, fenc'd about with Olive-trees.
CEL. West of this place,—brings you to the place:
OLI. — then should I know you by description,
Such garments, and such yeeres: the boy is faire,
Of femall favour, and bestowes himselfe
Like a ripe sister: the woman low
And browner than her brother: are not you
The owner of the house I did enquire for?
CEL. —we are.
OLI. Orlando doth commend him to you both,
And to that youth hee calls his Rosalind,
He sends this bloudy napkin; are you he?
ROS. I am: but what must we understand by this?

In view of the vast number of printers' errors in the Folio, and the fact that Rosalind was disguised as a young man so successfully that both her lover and father failed to recognize her, I suggest the onus is on the Folio to provide evidence in the context that Oliver committed the absurdity of addressing her and Celia as "Fair ones": this it fails to do. The Warwick's comment on the phrase is "If this is not a misprint, it is a curious slip on Shakespeare's part: I shall prove it *is* a misprint. The Cambridge says "Shakespeare seems to have forgotten that Celia was apparently the only woman present (Aldis Wright)." I regret that critics should impute forgetfulness to Shakespeare when there is an alternative. The Cambridge says further, "Is there any reason why Oliver, a man of middle age, should not address 'the boy' and his 'sister' as 'fair ones'? He had been told 'the boy is fair.'" The answer is "yes," for it would have given offence. No "shepherd youth" armed with a cutlass, attired as and conducting himself "like a ripe forester" would like to be addressed as though he were a girl. Knight, Irving, White, Staunton and Cowden Clarke, all pass "fair ones" without comment.

Oliver had been sent by Orlando "unto the shepherd youth" who, he was told, was "fair, of female favour and bestows himself like a ripe sister." W. M. Lettsom will long be remembered for his inspired suggestion that "sister" is a corruption of "forester." The line in which "sister" appears is a syllable short, and, as the Cambridge remarks, "forester" would put that right. The word was frequently shortened to "forster" and "foster". In passing, it is of interest to note that it is almost certain that persons having "Forster" as their patronymic, had ancestors living in, and possibly in charge of a forest, in the days when England was almost covered with them. "Foster" could easily have been mistaken for "sister," owing to "s" having been written and printed, in those days, in shape very similar to "f." Thus, "sister" is probably the result of two errors: the first copyist reduced "forester"

to "foster" and on a later occasion, the latter was changed to "sister." Lettsom's emendation was accepted by Dyce, Furness and many modern editors, but the Warwick endeavours to explain why the line is a syllable short. Cowden Clarke preferred to think that "Like a ripe sister" means "Like a full-grown sister." because she is taller than Celia; while, as a youth, she still has a feminine appearance. But dressed as a youth she would be expected to be the taller. And regarding "her feminine appearance," that was true of her face only, for, although she fainted at the sight of blood, Oliver still did not suspect she was not a young man. "Forester" is, undoubtedly the right word, so, when changed into "sister" the description of Rosalind's deportment was altered from masculine to feminine and therefore slanders her. Had she conducted herself "like a ripe sister," that is, like a young woman, neither her father or lover would have been deceived, so we must give her credit for having played her part to perfection.

Oliver's first words were addressed to Celia while Rosalind's back was turned, for the latter was urging Silvius to be off in the opposite direction, hence, "Fair ones" should be "Fair one." This is confirmed by Rosalind's remarks to Orlando, later in the play, "Your brother and my sister no sooner met, but they looked; no sooner looked, but they loved." so it is not surprising that he should have addressed Celia as "Fair one," but to claim that he pluralized the term in order to include a young fellow in "man's apparel" would be unreasonable. It follows that the stage grouping should be quite different to what it has been when "Fair ones" was uttered.

After his first greeting, Oliver made an enquiry as to the position of the cottage where he had been told he would find the shepherd youth and his sister. Had he thought he was addressing one of those persons, he would not have asked that question, but all he knew when he first spoke was that he had met a forester and a girl who, not improbably, was his sweetheart. He had only seen Rosalind's face momentarily, from a distance, so took her for the man she appeared to be, by her costume, weapon and attitude, the more especially as he had no eyes for anyone but Celia. Had he addressed them jointly, he would not have used the phrase "Fair one," "the gentle Celia" (Grant White) would have looked to Rosalind to reply, and Rosalind, without needing any prompting, would have done so, thus, all three would have acted differently.

A curl at the end of the written "one" would easily account for the "s," but in all probability, whoever made the copy in which "ones" first appeared, *could not forget* there were two women present, so, foolishly thinking he knew better than the draft, deliberately added the "s."

HOWARD PARSONS.

THE PREMIUM REPORT AND AWARD

The entries this time were well above the average in quantity but hardly equal to it in quality. Too much verse is still being submitted which is little but the undigested pouring out of other people's writing and ideas. Things are described as "wondrous" or "sublime" because the writer will not take the trouble or has not sufficient imaginative force to tell us what they really looked like. This "wondrous" is no more evocative than Horatio's "it would have much amazed you"; and is likely to beget as testy an answer.

Two poems stood out well in advance of the others. First of all "The Winter Within" by Diana M. Moore. This is a compact and telling piece of work in which no words are wasted; there is a close fusion between the inner and the outer states, between the heart and the world and this synthesis is held rigid and firm throughout the poem, with remarkable delicacy of touch and unerring perception. The effect is that of a balance in exact equi-poise. I dislike the comma in line 12, but can see no other fault. It has beauty, but it has the cold in it too and something sinister as well like the crying of wolves far off in the winter forest.

The second poem is Margaret Howard's "To an Unseen Admirer". This is as warm as the first poem is cold, and has the surge of great and passionate music in it. The fusion between thought and image is not so complete as in "The Winter Within". For example "rippling nothingness" seems to say much but says little in effect, for nothingness would not ripple. I take the meaning to be, "as a ripple dies to nothing, so is this"; but the actual expression is a little clumsy. I carry my earlier remarks to the point of saying that words like "sweet" and "lovely" should be avoided wherever possible. But there are some fine images in this poem—notably in the third and fifth verses.

I divide the prize between these two poems: £6 for "The Winter Within" and £4 for "To an Unseen Admirer".

Of the highly commended poems I would specially mention Kathleen M. Clark's "My Love is Dead" for its simplicity, freshness and genuine unforced pathos; Mary Savidge's "Sonnet for My Mother" for the sudden, terrible blow of the hammer that yet strikes up the sparks of beauty; J. P. Stevenson's long, intricate and very cleverly developed "Air on the G String"; parts of this poem contained by far the best poetry among all these entries, but a poem must be judged as a whole and not in parts, and this poem as a whole seems to me not taut enough, its levels irregular.

T. W. RAMSEY.

The full lists in alphabetical order are :

Highly Commended

M. G. Ball
J. T. Brockway
T. E. Casson
Kathleen M. Clark
Katharine Chapman Hibbetts
Patricia J. McCance
I. M. Mills
Mary Savidge
The Rev. J. P. Stevenson

Commended

S. J. Baggott
Dorothy Birch
Frances Heneage Burkitt
Jessie B. Heard
Pauline Huthwaite
Richard J. Jenkin
Irene Maunder
Morag Renwick
Dorothy Spring
Muriel Symmons
Kay Toovey

THE WINTER WITHIN

This is the long season;
The way stretches unending
And clouds blur the horizon,
Here and hereafter blending.

This is the dead season
Of hearts wounded and broken,
Of joy frost-bound and silent,
Of grief buried unspoken.

This is the lone season
When every man is a stranger,
For a soul sick with betrayal
Sees in confidence, danger.

This is the dark season;
The eye's lantern is shuttered,
Colour is drowned in weeping,
The altar-candles are guttered.

This is the night season
When Love, weary with sorrow,
Waits in a wordless longing
For miracles on the morrow.

DIANA M. MOORE.

TO AN UNSEEN ADMIRER

Should we meet? Or is there gain in loss?
As shadows oft more beautiful appear
Than substance grasped. Are more perpetual.
What wealth this wistful silence holds! I fear

Some chill may stay the dreams I dared to grow
Beyond my wiser sense. But when I pare
My thoughts; adjure my mind to sterner truths,
Yet, yet, I find you still entangled there.

A secret drinker, oft I cup my soul
About the wine dark deeps wherein you lie:
Would cross the exquisite brink; slake my long thirst,
And know not why some small voice hinders me;

Turns you to rippling nothingness; then waves
Of such sweet nearness that I almost drown.
Be strong for me, my crumbling will is yours:
I only pray that Time will not disown

Our lovely half born song, nor scare away
The delicate wings that make our day's delight;
As when a wild bird flies from trespasser,
And leaves the world more empty for its flight.

O let us guard this still, still cherished place;
The dearest sanctuary the night may bring;
More dear than touch of hand, or close embrace;
And envy none their heart's awakening.

MARGARET HOWARD.

REPORT ON *POETRY REVIEW* EPIGRAM COMPETITION

All kinds of 'verse and worse' and not a few real gems of poetry were among the efforts submitted as "Epigrams". The majority however were at the best merely rhymed aphorisms, with neither brevity, wit nor "sting" as distinct from that form of the epigram expressly prescribed by the competition: the standard set by that unknown ancient writer whose words—

"Omni epigramma sit instar opis:
Sit aculeus illi:
Sint sua mella;
Sit et corporis exigui"

have been translated in the well-known lines—

"The qualities rare in a bee that we meet
In an epigram never should fail;
The body should always be little and sweet,
And a sting should be left in its tail."

For the first place I suggest—"A rather frivolous thought on the works of Thomas Hardy" by Michael Pafford (Bristol)—

If Jude was lewd
Or not quite pure,
How shrewd of Jude
To be obscure!

With what reluctance one has to by-pass so many would-be brilliant efforts which fail for lack of a little paring and polish? There was hardly one entry that could not profitably have been whittled down, e.g., Miss P. M. Venables' (Bognor Regis, Sussex) epigram—

When Greek meets Greek
Then comes a tug of war,
When Scot meets Scot
Then the result's a draw.

Pare away the "thens" and the improvement is obvious. There were many other examples like this, but perhaps not such good epigrams, for I suggest this for the second place.

The third place goes to Miss Florence Thiot Milner (Florida, U.S.A.), for—

I asked permission to marry my love—
A beautiful "Annabel Lee"
But to my dismay, at the end of the day,
I found she had married me!

Highly Commended—

Edith M. Kelly
Mrs. P. E. C. Lyth
Dr. J. C. Lyth
I. M. Mills
Edgar Proudman
Rev. J. P. Stevenson
Dorothy Spring
L. de Wet
Mrs. G. D. Wilkinson

Commended—

Frederick Bratton
Katharin Chapman Hibbets
Sir Patrick Laird
Amelia Woodyard Lummis
Patrick Macgregor
Mrs. A. Mountains Epsom
Nancy Pollock
Anne E. Smith
Richard Vine

The prize of £5 will be divided as follows:—

1. Michael Pafford, £2 10s. 0d.
2. F. M. Venables, £1 10s. 0d.
3. Florence Thiot Milner, £1 0s. 0d.

F. J. R. Mason.

THE SCOTS POETRY COMPETITION

It has been a great joy to me to read the poems submitted for this competition; not because the standard has been high but because the tang of Scotland ran as a binding thread through all the entries.

There is both a raw virility and ineffable tenderness in the Scots tongue. It gave Burns, Ferguson and Ramsey their charm, and to-day proves a capable vehicle for Hugh McDiarmid, Maurice Lindsay, Douglas Young and others. On the other hand, the necessity for English—both economically and culturally, has resulted in its use, wholly by some and partly by others, in this competition.

The main fault I found when examining the submissions was the choice of artificial Scots where the poet had not the native facility, or, again, the employment of English when the theme yearned for Doric expression. Many, however, had splendidly resolved this issue, yet too often, I am afraid, they resorted to mere retrospection on Scotland's romantic past—Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Montrose, Rabbie Burns—old issues and dead occasions—with a loss in poetic feeling.

These are the general points, but in determining the winner I was guided by the quality of poetic compulsion, execution, and the presence of that characteristic feeling, imagery and colour, common to the best of Scots poetry. I liked the fine clarion strength of T. McNeil Auld in "The Clansman", and I was carried along by M. A. Luck's "The Plaid" to its abrupt, sad conclusion.

Edward Borland Ramsay has a pure gift of song that filled the poems he submitted. Of his, I like best "The Birken Shaw." Joan Page's poems were rather too full of poetic clichés and occasional faulty scansion (particularly noticeable in the first stanza of "Prelude to Sleep") to put her among the final judging, but she has true poetic perception.

The prize is divided between Chris. Ogilvie for "Grimalkin" and Mrs. Agnes Hall for "The Apprentice." Both poems are impregnated with that unique quality of superstitious undertone which has ever been found in Scottish verse and folklore, and both read with the lilt caught from generations of Scots minstrels who have sung their country's songs through the ages.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG.

THE APPRENTICE

Hame I gang by the Hangin' Wood
I' the half-dark, a' my lane.
If they kent hoo it freezes my breath an' blood,

If whiles they have fears their ain—
Maybe the ithers wad walk wi' me,
An' turn at my hame track's turn,
But hoo could I tell them or gar them see
The awful fear?—it's a death I dee
When I think there's a corpse on the Hangman's Tree,
The crookit tree at the burn.

An' never a wheesht could I say at hame:
Sae prood o' me—jist fifteen—
An' workin'—no, I wad feel sic shame
At the queer look i' their een.
But aye I'm fearin' tae see an' hear,
What I haena seen nor heard,
As hame I gang by the wood sae near
Tae the dreaded look or word.

I look an' look i' the mornin' licht.
I flyte at mysel an' sing
As I hurry by, but again at nicht
The fear's owre everything.
As hame I gang by the Hangin' Wood,
Though I ken each runt an' stane,
Terror's checkin' my breath an' blood—
My feet are hauden wi' heavy mud—
An' the wee low burn is a fearsome flood
As I gang i' the dark my lane.

A. Hall.

GRIMALKIN

"I think for sure you have tint your wits."
Said my cross hag-nurse to me.
When she saw I threw some dainty bits
To robins and finches and gay tomtits
She grumbled in jealousy.
Said she, "You have gone fey or fou
To mak sic work o'er the birds you do,
And as for thae wheen eldritch mice
That swee among the grasses—nice
'twould be for puir auld tabby here
To mak o' them her midday cheer."

A red-gemmed rowan growing outside
Nodded to me through the window wide,
Then, as I glowered at nurse, I saw

Each hand of her grow to a cruel claw,
And all her neat and dreary clothes
From white neck-ruff to striped wool hose
Turn into fur, like tortoise-shell.
Aha, thou witch! Now I know well
Why, as a child, I shrank from thee,
But see, I loose me from the spell.
Shoo, shoo, Grimalkin, speedily!
And I pulled a twig from the rowan tree.
Girning she fled within a trice,
Thus saved I birds and harvest mice.

But, when at night, I hear the owl
Hoot in the dark I also hear
A voice which gars me grue in fear,
For I know old nurse doth prowl,
Doth prowl.
Aroint, Grimalkin!
The rowan tree
Before my window will guardian be,
And flickering light from the friendly fire
Glistens on witch-ball, hanging there,
Which a fisherman drew from the pit of the sea.

CHRIS OGILVIE.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Madam,

Plea for Economy

A survey of the poetry of our language affords, in some wise, a depressing spectacle of massivity, a waste of words tracked only by generations of the patient reader. To his work alone do we owe the yield of matchless phrase and aphorism which illuminates and glorifies in all their minutiae, our temporal and spiritual affairs.

Our over-speeded age, however, holds small place for the 'patient reader'. Has not the time come for a plea for greater economy in the expression of thought, matching in its concentration the atomic-age in which we live? Have we not progressed to that stage where our poets shall recognise the final maturity of simplicity?

Poetry, as can be never too often reiterated, is of Spirit. And what is Spirit, but the highest concentrate of the best in human experience?

I am, etc.,

URSULA TIGHE HOPKINS.

Madam,

John Donne and the Spiritual Life

Mr. Raymund Bourne has already stung me once into utterance, in defence of an article of my own. I am stung again, this time in defence of Mr. Wagner's brilliant exposition of John Donne's anticipations of the commonplaces of contemporary metaphysical conclusion.

1. *Donne and the frame of flesh.*

(a) Either man is all animal, as the Behaviourists assert, with all his responses conditioned by purely physical stimuli, or he is not. If he is not, then, in addition to his body, there is what we call a soul or spirit. If that soul or spirit is physically part of the body, perhaps Mr. Bourne can help the physicists and physiologists (who cannot find it) by telling them whereabouts in the body it is. If it is not physically a part of the body, then it must have a separate existence from the body. If it has a separate existence, there must be some interaction between spirit and body which enables now body to use the spirit for bodily purposes, now spirit to use the body for spiritual purposes. If the body were the paramount partner the existence of such human idiosyncracies as the writing of poetry, which has no bodily values, would be purposeless and pointless. Religion has always insisted that spirit is the paramount, assuming the "frame of flesh" for the purpose of gaining experience through life in this world. Donne was quite certain about it. Our bodies, he asserts, are "not wee, wee are the intelligences, they the spheare." That is not a paradox; it is a statement of what many of use believe to be a hard fact. But that statement of spiritual supremacy represents, according to Mr. Bourne, a "false idea . . . of no value as an outlook on spiritual life"! Mr. Wagner is meticulous in giving authorities for his statements. Perhaps Mr. Bourne would like to give his authority for that outrageous assertion.

(b) The discoveries of modern physics lend great weight to the teachings of religion and to Donne's beliefs. Physics has conclusively established that reality as such and reality for human beings are not the same thing. In reality as such there is no shape, or colour, or sound, or solidity. These are extracted from the physical material by the human brain. That immensely complicated apparatus is alien from everything else in the universal system. That system could pursue its own ends quite regardless of whether or not life existed on one inconsiderable planet. The object of life is clearly not to benefit or bolster the physical scheme. Donne says that life is of spiritual value, and that the more we get out of life the more benefit will accrue to the soul. Both rationally and intuitively that is the only probable explanation of the circumstances of life. Mr. Wagner hits the nail square on the head when he speaks of "our pathetic four-dimensional continuum of thought." Until we realise

that brain and body are only a vehicle for the expression of mind and spirit we shall none of us get very far with spiritual evaluations. Perhaps Mr. Bourne would care to read my article on *The Scientific Bases for Belief* in the July Hibbert Journal, and try to continue his argument after that.

2. *Donne and the common soul*

(a) Mr. Bourne says that this is only "Shelley's doctrine over again." May I remind Mr. Bourne that John Donne died 161 years before Shelley was born?

(b) Donne's theory of unity has categorical Biblical support—"I and my Father are one" (John x. 30). Will Mr. Bourne, who states that if Donne asserts men all eventually unite in one soul "he is not an entirely reliable guide in matters spiritual" please state his authority?

(c) Modern psychological opinion tends to favour Donne's view. I don't agree; but not for any reason which would occur to Mr. Bourne; and I am only too fully aware that I am batting against some pretty effective opposition. Mr. Bourne, however, is quite prepared to be dogmatic. Would he care to read Professor H. H. Price's article on "The Philosophical Implications of Telepathy" which appeared in *The Listener* of 13th February, 1947, and which presents with considerable confidence an analogous situation concerning mind?

I am, etc.,

JOHN NANCE.

Madam,

Mr. A. V. Burbury, in your December issue, commences his criticism of my views regarding the Duke's speech (As You Like It, II, 7, 64), by saying I am much indebted to the Warwick Shakespeare. This seems to me to be giving that excellent edition part credit for these Emendations. I cannot admit his statement to be correct and am confident the Warwick itself would make no such claim.

Mr. Burbury says the Duke's speech is "certainly typical of Shakespeare's wit." That is unfair to Shakespeare. The third line of the speech is merely parenthetical and had it not been written, there would have been no reason to suppose the speech witty, or anything but slanderous: the third line, containing the "paramount" pun, aggravates the offence.

He says "the introduction of the bawdy scene was started by Jaques, and is part and parcel of the whole conception of the jester's function as set forth throughout this Act," but *Touchstone* is the jester, not Jaques, who is a philosopher and who, throughout his existence in the play, so far as I can see, makes no bawdy remark whatever. The bawdiness was started by the Duke, in his third line. Mr. Burbury bases his charge of bawdiness against Jaques on the word "pride" and says that besides its connection with "rich clothes," it stands for "proud flesh," but that Jaques made no such pun is abundantly proved by the context in which

occurs "the cost of princes on unworthy shoulders," "his bravery (fine clothes) is not at my cost" and (as Mr. Burbury quotes) "till that the wearer's very means do ebb." So it is certain that he never went through the clothes to the flesh!

It will be seen that Mr. Burbury defends the Duke's speech by imputing obscene joking to Jaques, but has failed to substantiate the charge. My thanks are due to him for his interesting offensive, which he has made with great skill, but I submit he has failed to weaken my contention that the Duke's speech is spurious.

I am, etc.,

HOWARD PARSONS.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. T. W. Ramsey, Chairman of the Council of the Poetry Society, has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

It has been suggested by some members of the Poetry Society that a presentation fund be started on the occasion of the retirement of Mr. Galloway Kyle, formerly Director of the Poetry Society and Editor of this journal. The following subscribers to the fund are acknowledged:—

Mr. Howard Parsons; Mr. P. E. A. Lever; Miss Rose Fee; Miss Ivy Smithson; Miss Nell Farleigh; Miss Curle; Miss Lucy Bredin; Miss Vassie; Mr. Creasey; Mr. Sackville Martin; Miss Bangay; Mr. Shorthose; Dr. J. Douglas Webster; Miss R. Shuttleworth; Mrs. T. L. Adamson; Mr. T. W. Ramsey; Mr. Hedley Lucas; Mrs. Cohen; Miss R. Cohen; A. S. Swinhoe; F. L. Jones; Miss I. Bell; Robert Walker; Miss R. Mckie; F. Bradford and Denis Turner.

Will members who would like to contribute to the fund please communicate with the General Secretary, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

Messrs. Gibson & Weldon have been appointed Hon. Solicitors to the Poetry Society.

The Annual General Business Meeting of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) will be held at the offices of the Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, on Wednesday, May 12th, 1948, at 3 p.m., to receive the annual financial statement, and elect the general members of the General Council. Names of delegates representing Centres should be sent to the General Secretary not later than April 12th, together with names of the Centre representatives on the General Council.

Admission will be made upon production of membership cards.

Any member who wishes to bring any business before the Annual Meeting must give twenty-eight days' written notice thereof to the

General Secretary. Nominations for membership to the General Council must be made by two members of the General Council or three unattached members twenty-eight days prior to the Meeting.

Any member wishing to inspect the audited Statement of Account before the General Business Meeting may do so at this office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Saturdays excepted), or may have a copy sent on application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope after April 30th.

By order of the Council, January 1st, 1948.

The Poetry Society's Auditions and Examinations

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines continually increases. In 1946 a record was established both in the number of auditions held and the number of entrants heard therein.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions have recently been revised. Copies may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges or private individuals. Applications for audition dates should be made as long as possible beforehand.

The Poetry Hour at 33 Portman Square, W.1

Readings, recitals or lectures on poetry are held weekly at 33 Portman Square, London W.1. The following programme has been arranged.

February 13th at 8 p.m. John Chandos. A reading—Chivalry.
February 20th at 8 p.m. John Bayliss. A reading—The White Knight.
February 27th at 8 p.m. Tony Van den Bergh. A reading—War, Women and Hate.
March 5th at 5 p.m. Trevor Blakemore. The Man Byron: A Revised Estimate.
March 12th at 8 p.m. Mary Field. A *Poetry Review* Selection.
March 19th at 8 p.m. T. W. Ramsey. Sprung Rhythm.

Please note that for the convenience of the majority of Members, who cannot attend 5 o'clock meetings, every fourth meeting is now to be held at this time, the three consecutive meetings to be held at 8 p.m. After Friday, 16th April, readings normally held at 5 p.m. will take place at 3 p.m.

Submissions to the Editor

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London W.1, for consideration in the ordinary way apart from entries for competitions. Such MSS. should be typewritten, or if this is impossible, printed legibly, and if their return is desired should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. The Editor can accept no responsibility for the safety of MSS. although every care will be taken to ensure this. Acceptance will not imply immediate publication; payment will be made upon publication.

The Poetry Society's Critical Service

This service continues to grow in popularity but it has been found necessary to amend slightly the terms upon which it is available to members. A minimum fee of 5s. will be charged in future and two poems only may be submitted for this sum. Additional poems will cost 2s. each for criticism and it is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed as this is as much in the author's interest as in the critic's.

The Premium Competition

The above competition continues as before with the offer of £10 in prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. There is no entrance fee, but competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped and addressed envelope will be required. See Rule 3.
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none will be returned in future.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition," The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address and the words "For Premium Competition closing ———— 1st."
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to The Poetry Review.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.

The closing dates for the six bi-monthly Premium Competitions will be until further notice, February 1st, April 1st, June 1st, August 1st, October 1st and December 1st.

The Greenwood Prize for 1948

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for 1948 for the best single poem in open competition. Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize," 33 Portman Square, London W.1. and must be received before July 31st. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed. (If a non-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym.) The winning poem will be printed in The Poetry Review and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may reserve near winners for publication in The Poetry Review.

The Love Lyric Competition

This annual competition offers £10 for an original love lyric. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. Not more than two poems may be entered by each competitor.
2. The length of an entry must not exceed thirty lines.
3. Entries must be typewritten, bear the name and address of the author and be addressed "Love Lyric Competition," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London W.1.
4. The Competition will close on 31st December, 1948.
5. The Editor reserves the right to publish any poem submitted, in The Poetry Review, but without prejudice to the author's right of publication elsewhere later.
6. Competitors must be members of the Poetry Society.
7. If competitors wish their entries returned will they please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

The Lord Alfred Douglas Sonnet Competition

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of instituting an annual competition for a sonnet upon any subject in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas.

It seems especially fitting that in this competition he who stood for form and the classic-necessity in the writing of a sonnet should direct us still in the framework to be used. And so accordingly the two forms on which he insisted so unsparingly are alone open for admission:

For the Octave—1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1.

For the Sextet—3, 4, 5: 3, 4, 5: or 3, 4: 3, 4: 3, 4.

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in the October issue of THE POETRY REVIEW in commemoration of Lord Alfred's birthday, October 22nd. Competitors must not submit more than two sonnets by June 30th, 1948. Address: "Sonnet," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London W.1.

POEMS OF PLACE COMPETITION

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors, who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems.

Less than a hundred lines should suffice. All entries for the 1948 competition must be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author, and must be addressed to "The Holmes Prize," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than April 1st. The judges may divide the prize money into three parts at their discretion. All entries shall remain at the disposal of the adjudicators until the award is published, and the winning poems and any other specially mentioned entries may be published in THE POETRY REVIEW If competitors wish their entries returned will they please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

A SCOTS POETRY COMPETITION

Mr. William Hutcheson, C.E., one of the soldier poets of the 17th Highland Light Infantry in the 1914-18 war, who subsequently published a collection of modern Scots verse, *Chota Chants,* has provided us with three consecutive premiums of £5 each for the encouragement and recognition of Scots poets of to-day. The third £5 is now on offer for poems addressed "Doric, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1." and received not later than November 1st, 1948. There should be not more than two entries from each competitor. Archaic and abstruse words should be avoided; if a stiff Doric term is used, it should be essential and virile and easily understood from the context. The poems should have a Scots flavour.

LUNCH HOUR POETRY READINGS

Regular public poetry readings in London are being given at Kingsway Hall every Thursday at 1-15 p.m. by Alan Phillips, Reader of the Poetry Society.

The Hampstead Centre of the Poetry Society

The Hampstead Centre of the Poetry Society has arranged a series of Poetry Readings for the year 1948. The meetings will be held at 8 to 9-30 p.m., at 9 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, Hampstead, N.W. 3, on the 1st and 3rd *Thursdays* each month. As, however, January 1st is New Year's Day and a public holiday, the readings for that month will be on the 8th and 22nd January; the following is the programme with dates and subjects for the first quarter of 1948:—

Thurs., Jan. 8. "Celtic Poets."
Thurs., Jan. 22. *Robert Nichols,* arranged by Miss Pamela Nicholl, with readings of his poems by members.
Thurs., Feb. 5. Annual General Business Meeting, followed by readings of poems of *Wit and Wisdom in the reign of Queen Anne.*
Thurs., Feb. 19. *The Frogs,* by Aristophenes. Gilbert Murray's translation.
Thurs., Mar. 4. *Narrative Verse,* introduced by Mr. P. H. Eaton, with appropriate readings.
Thurs., Mar. 18. *Emily Bronte,* and *Evelyn Underhill.*

THE CHELSEA POETRY CIRCLE (AFFILIATED TO THE POETRY SOCIETY)

President: Dame Sybil Thorndike

Sunday, February 22nd, at 3 p.m. Private reading at 314a Kings Road, S.W.3. "Some Contemporary Irish Poetry."
Sunday, March 21st, at 3 p.m. Private reading at 12 Windsor Court, Jubilee Place, S.W. (Fla 8592). "Women Poets of the Last Hundred Years."

For further particulars apply to John Carroll, Hon. Secretary, 5 Redesdale Street, S.W.3.

Cheques are waiting at The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1., for the following contributors to *Poetry Review*:—

D. M. Holt.
Joan Gilbert.
L. E. Brodie.
Joan Ogden.

Will they please contact the office, where there is no record of their addresses?

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CENTRE OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

PROGRAMME, 1948

Reading by members—unless otherwise stated—at the following addresses:—

January 10th at 3 p.m. *Scottish Poems.* British Legion, Tylers Green.

*February 14th at 3 p.m. Roy Campbell talking on his own poems with readings. St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe.

March 13th at 3 p.m. *Rivers, Lakes and Mountains.* Mrs. F. Dillon-Edwards, Faulkners, Chesham Bois.

April 6th at 2.45 p.m. *Robert Browning and E. B. Browning.* Mrs. A. F. Fremantle, Green Ways, Penn.

May 8th at 2.45 p.m. A talk on Christina Rossetti, by Dorothy Margaret Stuart, with readings of D. M. Stuart's poems. Mrs. Theodora Roscoe, Hornhill Court, Chalfont St. Peter.

June 12th at 2.45 p.m. *Characters and Portraits.* Mrs. E. Ward, Kynance, Manor Road, Penn.

July 10th at 2.45 p.m. *Alice Meynell and Francis Thompson.* Mrs. H. E. Langston, Merlewood, Stratton Road, Beaconsfield.

September 11th at 3 p.m. *Animals.* Miss E. D. Bangay, Tilehurst Cottage, Hemel Hempstead Road, Chesham.

*October 9th at 3 p.m. Cathleen Nesbitt reading poems of her own selection. St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe.

November 13th at 2.45 p.m. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline.* Mrs. E. Van den Bergh, Beacon View, Penn.

December 11th at 3 p.m. Members' own choice of poems by living authors. British Legion, Tylers Green.

**February 14th and October 9th. These meetings are open to the public.*

A POETRY BRAINS TRUST will be conducted at the Poetry Society's Headquarters, 33 Portman Square, on Sunday, 22nd February, at 3 p.m.

The Brains Trustees will be: Wrey Gardiner, Dallas Kenmare, Herbert Palmer, William Kean Seymour, Derek Stanford. Question Master: Muriel Spark.

Questions are invited on any subject connected with poetry, these to be submitted to: The Question Master, Poetry Brains Trust, 33 Portman Square, W.1, before *Saturday, 14th February.* It will be realised that only a limited number of questions can be selected.

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